

Smuts and the Politics of Colonial Expansion: South African  
Strategy in Regard to South-West Africa [Namibia] and the  
League of Nations Mandate: c. 1914-1924

Submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Department of History at the  
University of Cape Town

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Master of Arts - Department of History  
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'Smuts and the Politics of Colonial Expansion: South African Strategy in Regard to South-West Africa [Namibia] and the League of Nations Mandate: c.1914-1924' is an analysis of Jan Smuts's central role in the Union's conquest of South West Africa in 1915, the fight for annexation of the territory in 1918-1919, and his subsequent shaping of the Mandate as Prime Minister of the Union until 1924. In addition it is an investigation of Smuts's motivations during this period.

Three significant conclusions emerge from this dissertation. Primarily, I argue that Smuts was involved in all three above described stages of the Union's acquisition of South-West Africa, as both a policy-maker and the lead representative of South Africa's interests.

Most importantly, I evaluate Smuts's incentives for so passionately leading the attempt to incorporate South-West Africa and contend that Smuts wanted to annex the territory because of his desire to create a white-led superstate in southern Africa, independent of European influence and with regional hegemony, and that the annexation of South-West Africa was an important step in that direction for Smuts.

Additionally, I assess Smuts's successes and failures and conclude that his failure to fully realize annexation of the territory was responsible for Namibia's eventual independence.

In order to prove my assertions, I rely on both secondary and primary information from South African and Namibian archives. My primary sources are drawn from the papers of the Governor-General of the Union, the Prime Minister of the Union, the Secretary and Administrator of South-West Africa, and others such as the American Ambassador to South Africa. Additionally, I rely heavily on the extensive Smuts Papers and official documents from the Union and British governments during and after world War I. My secondary sources are too extensive to list here but concentrate mainly either on Smuts or on South African involvement in South-West Africa. I use these sources to support my thesis but equally often argue against the conclusion drawn by their authors. Central to my thesis are works by Donald, Maryse-Cockram, and William Hancock.

My analysis of Smuts's involvement in South-West Africa during the period 1914 to 1924 is important in several ways. Primarily, I believe my conclusions in this field give an original explanation which can be applied to Smuts's involvement in the histories of South Africa, the surrounding African nations, and the United Nations. In addition, this thesis helps explain the failure of Union intervention in South-West Africa [Namibia], which is a poorly understood topic. Last, there is a paucity of academic research about the period 1914-1924 in southern Africa, and especially in Namibia, and part of the contribution of this thesis is to fill that gap.

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## INTRODUCTION

Comparatively few men or women in the history of our world can be said to have shaped the future of their country or their region. One of those men was Jan Smuts, and the bookshelves are full of his biographies. Some, like his son J.C. Smuts, say that he was 'essentially of the Herculean mould of nation-builder and statesman, a man of broad-minded tolerance'<sup>1</sup>. Modern political culture, building on the new politically correct view of the past, casts him as a virulent racist. Keith Hancock,<sup>2</sup> along with other well-respected authors, perceives him as a more complex figure, one with great loyalties and huge disappointments, a man who was a brilliant captain but a mediocre general. This man, called 'Oom Jannie' by his friends, was to leave a lasting legacy on both his country and his world. I will present a new view of Smuts as an expansionist who believed in a great and moral destiny for his nation and who strove to achieve it.

This dissertation is not an attempt to chronicle the life of Jan Smuts, nor will it present Smuts as a figure isolated and unaffected by the trends and social factors around him. It is meant to be a look at the expansionist ideology, goals, and work of Jan Smuts by specifically studying one episode of his career: the acquisition of South-West Africa as a League of Nations Mandate for the Union, and the subsequent administration of that territory during his first tenure as the Union's Prime Minister

This thesis will outline three major parts Smuts played in the acquisition and management of South-West Africa. First, as Defense

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<sup>1</sup> Smuts, J.C., Jan Christiaan Smuts. Cassell, London, 1952, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Hancock K., Smuts, Volumes I and II, Cambridge University Press, London, 1962..

Minister, and in partnership with General Louis Botha, he conquered German South-West Africa, exerting physical control over the territory. Next, he took on the role of diplomat, and in creating the mandate system and acquiring the mandate at the Paris Peace Conference of 1918-1919 he fought the battle for international recognition of South African sovereignty over the region. Third, as Prime Minister he was the highest administrative authority for the mandate, responsible to the League of Nations, the South African people, and the population of South-West Africa. In this position he attempted to gain the acceptance of the South African administration by the many groups of people within the Protectorate. In all these roles his personal views, beliefs, and conception of political realities influenced much of the policy implemented by the administration of the mandate.

The starting point for this thesis is Smuts's declaration, in a 1917 speech in London:

We have started in previous times to civilise Africa from the North. All these attempts to civilize Africa have failed. We now try to proceed from the other end - from South Africa... the time is coming when it will be a misnomer to speak of 'South Africa' because the northern limits of our civilization will have gone so far that it will be almost impossible to use the word 'South' any more except in reminder of our original starting point. <sup>3</sup>

The central thesis of this dissertation is that Smuts discerned, in the Union's expansion into South-West Africa, an opportunity to expand northward - to spread the Union's 'civilising' influence into the Namibian region. His eventual goal was the creation of a Union-led

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<sup>3</sup> Smuts, J.C., from a speech given in 1917, London, reprinted in War Time Speeches, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1917, pp. 90-91.

superstate in southern Africa. N.G. Garson put forth this theory when he wrote, 'Smuts's African policy amounted to the single-minded pursuit of formal expansion from the Union as its base'<sup>4</sup>. Garson, however, did not fully address the question of why Smuts was so eager to amalgamate the other parts of Southern Africa with the Union. That issue is central to my argument.

In this dissertation I will attempt to show that the forceful acquisition of South-West Africa, and the subsequent Union dominion of the territory, is an example of Smuts's attempts not only to secure white domination of southern Africa, but also to ensure that it was the Union of South Africa that accomplished this task, and not a foreign power.

Ronald Hyam quotes Smuts as saying, in reply to Herbert Gladstone's question 'What is South Africa' in reference to the Union Defence Act, 'South Africa as used in the Bill is a geographical expression which we *advisedly do not define*. It would surely cover any part of the continent of Africa South of the equator.'<sup>5</sup> Smuts's imperialism, Hyam shows in his book The Failure of South African Expansion: 1908-1948, was almost boundless.

Smuts's experiences during and after the Boer War in politics, on the battlefield, and as a representative of both the Afrikaner and the British point of view throughout his life helped shape his actions. Was he an Afrikaner nationalist, opening South-West Africa to his people, or a British imperialist, responding to the government's call to the Dominions to assist in the war effort and attempting to seize suzerainty of

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<sup>4</sup> Garson, N.G., 'Smuts and Africa', Unpublished, University of Cape Town, 1977, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Hyam, R., The Failure of South African Expansion: 1908-1948, Macmillan Press, London, 1972, p.26.

a profitable region?<sup>6</sup> My research shows that he neither sought to increase British power (in fact, this paper will discuss ways in which he limited it for the Union's benefit), nor to exclude non-Afrikaners from enjoying the profits of the South-West African victory. Smuts was concerned with the success of creating a white-led superstate from the Union, not with serving solely British or Afrikaans ends. He himself referred to a 'Monroe Doctrine for the South'.<sup>7</sup> Smuts had grand designs for the junction of the Union and its neighbors, yet the only territory which he succeeded in adding to the Union was South-West Africa, the success of which this paper will evaluate.

The central argument of this essay is that Smuts's personal concept of expansion was a driving force behind Union policy in South-West Africa during the period from 1914 to 1924. A further purpose of this dissertation is to discuss how and to what extent Smuts was able to implement policies he believed would bind the Mandated territory to the Union in order to achieve his goal.

This dissertation will dispute the conclusions of some historians that Smuts's primary concern in supporting the campaign and demanding the mandate was for increased security, as argued by Maynard Swanson and other scholars.<sup>8</sup> I will also dispute the limited role ascribed to Smuts by Gavin Lewis<sup>9</sup> regarding the indigenous peoples of the territory, and by

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<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that Piet Meiring's Afrikaans-language biography of Smuts, Smuts: die Afrikaner ( Tafelberg Press, Cape Town, 1975) , is translated in English to Smuts: the Patriot.

<sup>7</sup> Speech to the Royal Geographical Society, January 28, 1918, in Smuts, War Time Speeches, p. 71.-84.

<sup>8</sup> Swanson M., 'South-West Africa in Trust', in Prosser, Gifford, and Louis Britain and Germany in Africa, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1967.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, G, 'The Bondelswartz Rebellion of 1922'. MA Thesis, Rhodes University, 1977.

other historians who overemphasize the role played by the Mandate Administration and undervalue that played by Smuts.

Smuts's role in South-West Africa has never been researched holistically. The many books on Smuts mostly neglect the mandated territory. Historians such as Cockram<sup>10</sup>, and Taylor<sup>11</sup>, studying Namibia's past either explored Smuts's role only superficially or concentrated on his part in the debate over the region's future in the United Nations after 1948. Certain aspects of the topic, such as the annexation debate in the League of Nations, have been looked at intensely, but mostly from other points of view and paradigms - researchers such as George Curry<sup>12</sup> have portrayed Wilson's view of Smuts's role, and Sara Pienaar<sup>13</sup> looked intently into the views of Britain and the League of Nations on Smuts's attempts to establish sovereignty over the territory. This thesis, however, is original in its heuristic approach to the relationship between Smuts and the mandate.

The most useful primary sources, the Smuts Papers, were well organized by Hancock and van der Poel, but the extracts on South-West Africa - British and South African governmental papers, private letters, and speeches - have not been thoroughly researched by historians. The Administrator's Reports for South-West Africa appear to have been seldom used as well. In addition, newspapers, diaries, the papers of the

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<sup>10</sup> Cockram, G., South West African Mandate, Juta and Company, Cape town, 1976.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, P., 'The Union Government's Treatment of the South-West Africa Mandate, 1920-1924', MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1944.

<sup>12</sup> Curry, G., 'Woodrow Wilson, Jan Smuts, and the Versailles Settlement', in American Historical Review, LXVI, 4, 1961.

<sup>13</sup> Pienaar, S., South Africa and International Relations between the Two World Wars: The League of Nations Dimension. Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1987.

Administrator and Secretary of South-West Africa and the Governor-General and Prime Minister of South Africa have proven very useful.

I hope to be able to help re-evaluate a period in South-West Africa's history which is very confusing and has not been very well studied, but which has received new interest and can be more easily researched because South Africa's occupation has now ended.. I hope to contribute to the debate on Jan Smuts, a hero to some but a villain to others, by exploring his motives for expansion in South-West Africa and especially by discussing his understanding of the realities of his political situation in the Union. Lastly, this thesis will investigate information about the Treaty of Versailles, the Paris Peace Conference, and the creation of the mandates from a new perspective, and show in new detail the role played by Smuts in creating the mandatory system.

## CHAPTER 2: SOME ASPECTS OF SOUTH-WEST AFRICA BEFORE WWI

### EUROPEANS AND AFRICANS

In 1482 the first Portuguese sailor exploring in his newly developed lateen-rigged caravel and charged by his prince to find a path around the tip of Africa, landed at Cape Cross in Namibia. Although he was the first European to land on that desolate stretch of coastline, Diego Cao was to be followed by American, British, Dutch, and German explorers and conquerors.<sup>1</sup>

The indigenous Namibians were, during most of this period, both oblivious to and uninterested in the actions of the westerners. The 19th century, however, saw expansion by white traders and missionaries into the Namibian interior. Some explorers, such as Charles John Anderson, pushed in to the sparsely populated Kaokoveland and Ovamboland, while other, mostly Rhenish missionaries, set themselves up in Namaland.<sup>2</sup> They could not believe that any significant population would live in the desert area that made up much of Namibia.

In fact, there were several populations. Not only were there quite a few bushmen and Nama, but also six separate Bantu-speaking groups - the Herero, the Kavango, the East Caprivians, the Kaokolanders, the Tswana, and the Ovambo. The Nama and the Herero were, for much of that century, engaged in a war over the Windhoek plateau, which was valuable as pasture.

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<sup>1</sup> Cooper, A., The Occupation of Namibia: Afrikanerdom's Attack on the British Empire, University Press of America, NY, p. 7

<sup>2</sup> Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p. 7

Britain became the first colonizer in Namibia when, between 1861 and 1866, it took control of several islands off the coast which were rich in guano deposits<sup>3</sup>. The islands were later transferred to the administration of the Cape Colony. In 1868, the Rhenish asked the British authorities in the Cape Colony for protection, but they declined the invitation to annex the region. In 1878, after a series of such petitions, the United Kingdom agreed to annex Walvis Bay, as it was the only good port in the region. Sixty years later, British politicians would explain " the assumption [was] that Britain, either directly or *through the Cape Colony*,<sup>4</sup> was entitled to take over the administration of the Territory when local conditions justified the expense."<sup>5</sup> These events would have a significant influence on the Union's future claims to the territory.

By the late 1800s, immigrants from the Cape colony were also moving in to the area. These newcomers were both white Afrikaners and Coloureds. The 'Coloured' population, which became known as the Baasters (from Bastard), came originally from the Cape Colony. "Lonely white farmers and trekkers took Khoikhoi concubines to such an extent that a substantial mixed group emerged."<sup>6</sup> The colony at that time still bred prejudices against the khoikhoi, especially since they were slow to accept Christianity, and this meant that the children of these unions were not legitimized among white society. Instead, they tended to be marginalized and join with detribalized Khoikhoi to form their own communities.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 7

<sup>4</sup> italics inserted

<sup>5</sup> Amery, L.S., German Colonial Claim, London, Chambers Press, 1939, p. 54.

<sup>6</sup> Fredrickson, WM, White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History, Oxford University Press, New York, 1981, p. 123.

The Germans, meanwhile, had set up a colony, called Luderitz in the southern part of the country, and the agent there asked if the British would protect their settlement. The British once again refused, and in 1883 a German warship was sent to protect the settlement.<sup>7</sup>

### GERMAN COLONY

Why Germany finally moved into the colonial field is a question that has long faced historians. The traditional theory is that Bismarck had always favoured the idea of an Imperial Germany and was just waiting for a good time to expand. However, modern historians exclude this theory.

Gail Cockram argues that Bismarck "desired an anti-British combination with France in the colonial field"<sup>8</sup> For that reason, Germany formally annexed Angra Pequena (Luderitzbucht) and between September and October 1884 had convinced the natives to accept German protection.<sup>9</sup> Allan Cooper, however, believes that Bismarck was influenced by internal groups, such as the Deutsche Kolonialverein, who were interested in German expansion for both economic and nationalist purposes. The latter theory seems very possible because 1884 was an election year in Germany. Immanuel Geiss, in his analysis of German foreign policy during this period, wrote

Certain economic, political, and psychological factors were at this time strong enough to render colonial expansion not only possible, but from the standpoint of Germany's ruling classes even necessary. Industrial expansion in Germany created increasing demands for

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>8</sup> Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> The same month the British proclaimed a protectorate in Bechuanaland, provoking border disputes between the two new territories.

raw materials and markets for industrial goods. A feeling of power and pride after the founding of the Reich made for increased self-confidence.<sup>10</sup>

Geiss does not expand on the economic factor, but the depression of 1870-1873 hit Germany very hard, and there was a general feeling that the colonial system would soften future blows. This seems to confirm the theory that Bismarck was reacting to internal pressures when the Germans began their colonial adventures.

Even in the 1880s, many members of the Reichstag opposed official colonialism. However, tentative steps were taken towards exerting national power in areas important to German industry such as Somoa. In 1884, therefore, the Germans annexed their first official colony when Gustav Nachtigal, with a mandate from Bismarck, took over the South-West Africa territory.

Although the British did not seem to resent this move very much, South Africans were split by it. On the one hand, the British South Africans were not happy to have a continental power on their northern border. Many Afrikaners, however, felt a certain kinship with the Germans and saw them as an ally for the Transvaal and Orange Free State republics. During the Boer war, in fact, the Transvaal government sent deputations to Germany to ask for guns and aid. Botha himself, at the end of the Boer war, had traveled with de la Rey and de Wet (later his enemy) to collect 80,000 pounds collected by the German people for the Boer people.<sup>11</sup>

The opportunity for the Union to annex the territory had been lost to the Germans, but it was later to help form their annexation claim

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<sup>10</sup> Geiss, I., *German Foreign Policy, 1871-1914*, Routledge Direct Editions, London, 1976.

<sup>11</sup> Harrison, D., *The White Tribe of Africa*, Southern Book Publishers, Johannesburg, 1987, p. 61.

during the 1918-1919 Paris Peace Conference. The Afrikaners considered South West Africa part of their heritage, and the failure of Britain to attach it to the Union was one of the many complaints they had towards the Empire. "Geographically and ethnically... South West Africa was viewed as largely an extension of the karoo, steppe, and desert of the Cape and Kalahari hinterlands," writes Maynard Swanson.<sup>12</sup> By the time the First World War began, two thousand 'Cape subjects' were living in the German territory.<sup>14</sup> These were Afrikaner farmers who had moved north, in the traditional direction of 'away from the British' with their families and their cattle.

The Germans were inexperienced colonialists, and the first Minister-Resident, Heinrich Ernst Goring<sup>14</sup>, was sent to London to study colonial administration before undertaking this appointment in 1885. His inexperience, and the inexperience of the German settlers, can be seen in their inability to stop the Nama-Herero wars from spiraling into the most important and tragic event of the German occupation, the Herero War in 1904-1909.<sup>15</sup>

The history of this event in general is well known. The fighting between the Nama and Herero continued until 1888, when Minister Goring interspersed German troops between them and called their leaders together to try to force a negotiated treaty. However, Chief Kamaherero told Goring that his was a sovereign territory and ordered Goring and his men to leave or be killed. In humiliation, Dr. Goring was forced to ask for British protection at Walvis Bay.

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<sup>12</sup> Swanson, 'South-West Africa in Trust', p. 633.

<sup>14</sup> 'Memorandum on the Country known as German South-West Africa', Union Government Papers, 1915, PA, p. 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> Minister Goring was the father of the famous Nazi Luftwaffe commander, Hermann Goring.

<sup>15</sup> Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p. 10.

This provided Britain's second opportunity to gain South West Africa. Bismarck suggested to Joseph Chamberlain that Germany exchange Heligoland, a North Sea island, for South West Africa. However, the British refused the trade.

### THE HERERO WAR

In 1904, the Germans were forced to once again deal with the rebellious Herero, this time with the help of certain Nama groups.<sup>16</sup> They almost had to face the Nama as well. Samuel Maherero sent a note to Hendrik Witbooi, the Nama chief, inquiring about assistance in the upcoming war. The message never reached Witbooi.

At the time of the rebellion, the German governor was Von Trotha. Subsequent British and Union propaganda painted Von Trotha as an evil, murdering Atilla. Certainly, he was an experienced commander who had fought in East Africa and the Boxer rebellion in China. By 1909, he had defeated the Herero, but their resistance was impressive and the war was long and hard-fought.

The Herero rebellion is relevant for this dissertation in three ways. Primarily, the brutality of the war made it useful for Union propaganda purposes during the first world war and the subsequent Paris Peace Conference. The 1918 British report on the region was particularly critical of Von Trotha. 'Treachery and breaches of faith were to him admissable...Von Trotha said, "let not man, woman, or child be spared - kill them all".'<sup>17</sup> The South Africans used this tool to such effect that in

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<sup>16</sup> Cooper, The Occupation of Namibia, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> British Report on the Treatment of South West African Natives by the Germans, 1918, pp. 56.

1916 they were able to hold criminal trials of German military personnel, using information not only from native sources, but also from contemporary German critics of the handling of the Herero uprising. This, as we shall see, helped Smuts and his colleagues in 1915 and again in demanding the mandate in 1919. However, it is also indicative of the independence and pride of the indigenous peoples, whose struggles for rights were to cause Smuts trouble under the Union's administration as well.

Second, the involvement of Afrikaners living in South West Africa in putting down the rebellion also had a propaganda effect when they were denied certain rights in later years. 'But for the assistance of hundreds of British and Dutch Afrikanders it is doubtful whether the Herero war would have been settled even in the space of four years. There are Boers in the country today who have rendered splendid service to the Germans, but who have been treated shamefully ever since., stated the Transvaal Chronicle in 1915'<sup>18</sup> Certainly the Afrikaner population of the region decreased between 1909 and 1914, and, whatever the cause, this fact helped the Union government ensure the loyalty of many Afrikaners during the war. The Afrikaans and British settlers' treatment under the German administration would also later constitute part of the Union's claim at the Paris Peace Conference.

The third interesting point was the effect the war had on the German people, both the local population and those in Germany. The war cost them 600 million marks, but more importantly it resulted in the deaths of 798 Germans casualties and 698 from disease. A German General wrote, "A country in which so many German sons have fallen and been

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Calvert, South West Africa During the German Occupation, 1915, p. 31-32.

buried can no longer be a foreign land to us, but rather a piece of the homeland, to care for which is our sacred duty."<sup>19</sup> Germany's attachment to their first colony had now grown, and was going to strengthen their resolve to hold on to (and reclaim) the territory during the years covered by this dissertation.

### THE TERRITORY IN 1915

The terrain of most of South West Africa is dry, making offensive military operations very difficult since water and transportation needs are hard to meet. There was, by 1915, one long railroad cutting through the middle of the country north to south, splitting at Windhoek to go west to Swakopmund. Along this, a defending German force could move quickly, while tearing up the tracks behind it.

For this reason, the Germans felt quite safe in their protectorate, and it was valuable to them indeed. Militarily, South West Africa fulfilled two major purposes. It provided a port (one of the few on the west coast of sub-Saharan Africa) big enough for the provisioning of large warships, and the Germans had constructed a radio tower in Windhoek which could receive signals from the South Atlantic fleet, relay them to Togo, and from there to Berlin, and vice-versa.

To protect these assets, the Germans assembled 2,500 regular army troops known as the Protectorate Troop. They were assisted by 700 policemen, levies from the 12,000 strong German population, and, they hoped, the Afrikaners.

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<sup>19</sup> General Von Deimling, quoted in Cockram, South-West African Mandate p. 11.

Economically, South West Africa was important as a source of meat, but, more importantly, for its diamond mines which, though underdeveloped in 1915, had great potential. These diamonds, of course, were an added reason for South Africa to covet its neighbour to the north. The huge South African diamond industry was undercut by the low (1s 6d to 5s) extraction cost of the German South West African fields.<sup>21</sup>

The Baaster groups had settled on extensive lands mostly centered around Reheboth and in the south. By the beginning of the 20th century, about 19,000 of them lived in South West Africa, joined by about 32,000 other coloureds living mostly in the big cities - Windhoek, Walvis Bay, Luderitz, who did not identify with the Reheboth Baasters.<sup>22</sup> By 1915, the Baasters had set up a strong community in the arid areas around Reheboth, centered mostly on the water-holes and wells which kept their all-important cattle alive during the dry heat of the summer.

This was the status of German South West African on the eve of World War One. It was a profitable colony for Germany, although a sometimes troublesome one, bordering on a large British dominion to the South, with nine major population groups and two major industries.

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<sup>21</sup> Calvert, A., South West Africa During the German Occupation, T. Werner Laurie Press, London, 1915, p. 90.

<sup>22</sup> Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p. 6. The latter group is mostly unimportant for our purposes because, although it formed about 3% of South West Africa's population, it was not significant in causing major trends, while the Baasters were central to several major events covered in this dissertation.

### CHAPTER 3: THEMES IN THE LIFE OF JAN SMUTS 1870 - 1915

Jan Smuts is a well-studied and controversial figure. Several themes in his life warrant discussion. As a young man, Smuts developed some of these interests and traits which were to shape his future relationship with South-West Africa.

#### DIPLOMAT AND GENERAL

Smuts was at times a military man. He was 'an electrifying presence...who could drive men beyond exhaustion and sickness and not lose their faith in him.'<sup>1</sup>, who led his troops on the greatest raid of the Boer war.

Hancock indicates Smuts's brilliance in the creation of the Republics' grand strategy - the overall planning of the war. While it cannot be denied that Smuts was often privy to the goings on at the top, scholars of the East African campaign, of which Smuts had sole command might disagree with Hancock's theory that Smuts was a brilliant strategist. One anecdote about Smuts is that he once told a woman who accompanied him on a botany trip, when she expressed wonder that a military man should know so much about botany, 'but Madam, I'm only a General in my spare time.'

Smut's true brilliance lay in his leadership of a Commando. During the Boer War, he led his men on the longest, deepest raid of the war - one considered impossible by the enemy. At one point he had eleven columns

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<sup>1</sup> 'The German East Africa Campaign 1914-1918, Various Dairy Extracts: The Diary of Brett Young', Military History Journal, Vol 6(6), Dec. 1985.

of British troops after him.<sup>2</sup> The kind of leadership he provided was the kind needed during both the Boer war and the First World War. Smuts did his own reconnaissance, instead of sending out one of his junior officers.<sup>3</sup>

By 1915, Smuts was also developing a reputation for diplomacy. Many of his contemporaries called him Slim<sup>4</sup> Jannie, and he was described as 'a very clever, a very cunning man.'<sup>5</sup> Smuts had ample opportunity to utilize his diplomatic skills in the service of the Transvaal Republic. During April 1899, he was the chief negotiator for the Republic before the Boer war, but these negotiations were also his first failures, for the British High Commissioner, Milner, and others were committed to war.<sup>6</sup> After the war, Smuts was a prime advocate of the Union, and became the central figure in the creation of the Union in 1909.

### PERSONAL IMPERIALISM

One of Smuts's most important interests, for the purposes of this dissertation, was his interest in acquiring new territory for the Union. There is no doubt he was pro-expansion. His 1917 speech in London, quoted earlier, is one glaring example. At various times during his life, his efforts were aimed at Tanganyika, Swaziland, Rhodesia, Bechuanaland, and Mocambique, as well as South-West Africa. But what was his motive for stimulating expansion?

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<sup>2</sup> War Office Reports 32/877 file 8271, PA.

<sup>3</sup> J.C. Smuts, Jan Christiaan Smuts, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> Slim, in South African contemporary lingo, meant slick or cunning.

<sup>5</sup> Harrison White Tribe of Africa, p. 59.

<sup>6</sup> Hancock, Smuts, v1/pp. 88-90.

Many historians and lay people certainly felt he was a British imperialist. He did, after all, study at Cambridge, and he served the British government in various capacities during the war years 1916-1918 and for a short while after. He earned the keys to London, York, and many other major English cities, and was asked by Lloyd George to occupy important posts in Palestine, Hungary, and elsewhere. In fact, he was so trusted by the British government that he was asked to mediate the problems in Ireland and Palestine.<sup>7</sup>

Ronald Hyam explains much of Botha's and Smuts's attempts at expansion, including the incorporation of the High Commission Territories, as expressions of an Afrikaans movement to end British hegemony over the region. 'Deep-rooted desire for incorporation of the Territories can thus be seen as an aspect of the Afrikaner nationalist movement'.<sup>8</sup> Although in this case he was writing about a slightly later period, Hyam ascribes a lot of Smuts's imperialism to his Afrikaans heritage. Certainly many of Smuts's contemporaries, like Barry Hertzog, were opposed to Britain's power in the region. Hertzog opposed offensive operations in South-West Africa because he feared at the end of the war the British would take it over.<sup>9</sup> Smuts, however, had a completely different viewpoint from Hertzog because of his unique experiences.

Smuts's first experience with expansionist policy came when, at the youthful age of 18, he was called upon to defend Rhodes' attempts to open up the lands north of the Transvaal, speaking to an audience at the Kimberley Town Hall. His subject matter was interesting - mostly a

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<sup>7</sup> Hancock, *Smuts*, Vol.I p. 432.

<sup>8</sup> Hyam, *The Failure of South African Expansion 1908-1948*, p.74.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.36.

defense of Rhodes and a call for fusion of the two 'Teutonic races' in South Africa, a theme he was to repeat often.<sup>10</sup>

But not everyone was so enthusiastic about Smuts's apparent imperialism. Not every Afrikaner was as convinced as Smuts was about reconciliation with the British, who, they felt, had made them a conquered people, imprisoning their women and children in concentration camps and killing their commandos. Later in his life, some Afrikaners blamed Smuts for splitting them as a people.

Smuts sold us to the British. He became an Anglophile. He became 'the greatest Empire builder of the day' so the London Times said. 'A philosopher, a statesman and a soldier.' He was really a politician. We were under the impression, and we still are of the same conviction, that Smuts misled Botha... Smuts wasn't a man with any feelings. He should not have been born an Afrikaner. He should have been born an American or a Britisher who had a big force behind him.<sup>11</sup>

But Smuts himself took issue with the perception of him as an empire builder. As late as 1926, speaking at a monument to the women and children who had died during the Anglo-Boer War, Smuts said 'we stood alone in the world, a small people ranged against the mightiest Empire on earth'.<sup>12</sup> He declared South-West Africa a part of the Afrikaans heritage.<sup>13</sup>

The result of Smuts's experiences with both European-style imperialism and the Afrikaans fixation with land and living space was to create a personal style of expansionism. From his Cambridge education and his work with Rhodes, he acquired a preoccupation with the duty of

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<sup>10</sup> Smuts Papers, 23/20.3

<sup>11</sup> Henning Klopper, quoted in Harrison, *The White Tribe of Africa*, p. 59.

<sup>12</sup> Fry, A. Ruth, *Emily Hobhouse*, p. 290., quoted in Hancock, *Smuts*, p. 181.

<sup>13</sup> SP 12/143A Smuts wrote, in this letter to D. Reitz, that once the war was over, those Afrikaners who had opposed it would see the benefit in expanding and come around to support the war.

spreading 'civilisation'. From his Afrikaans upbringing and his association with leaders such as Kruger, he inherited a love of the land and a sense of an 'Afrikaans heritage' in southern Africa. However, he did not accept the idea that the Afrikaner had sole dominion over the land, nor that Britain should exercise full sovereignty. Instead, he came to believe in a unified South Africa and was extremely involved in the creation of the Union in 1910.

Looking back on the South Africa Act in 1917, Smuts wrote 'I am not sure... whether in the distant future the South Africa Act will not be remembered as much for its appendix as for its principal contents.'<sup>14</sup> The appendix was important because it failed to set any borders for the nation, and thus left expansion open as an option for the fledgeling nation. Smuts's view of that expansion, I argue, was the creation of a huge white-led state encompassing the Union, the High Commission Territories of Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland, South-West Africa, and the Portuguese territories of Angola and Mocambique.

Smuts believed very strongly in the unification of Boer and Britain. In a 1918 speech he wrote: 'We want to create a blend out of the various nationalities and to create a new South African nation out of our allied racial stocks, and if we succeed in doing that we shall achieve a new nationality embracing and harmonizing our various traits and blending them all into a richer national type than could otherwise have been achieved.'<sup>15</sup> But it is Smuts's actions more than his words which show what his beliefs were - that he was a man who felt he was a better

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<sup>14</sup> Smuts, *War Time Speeches*, p.88.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, excerpt of June 1918 London speech..

Afrikaner because he had learned to appreciate British culture. Some of these actions will be outlined later in this dissertation.

### SMUTS'S RACIAL BELIEFS

It is against the backdrop of his personal opinions of expansionism that Smuts's policy towards non-whites comes into question. He believed in unifying the white races because they were, together, in opposition to a larger native population. '[In South Africa] you have an overwhelming black population with a small white population which has got a footing there and which has been trying to make that footing secure for more than two centuries', he commented in the same speech as he expounded on the unification of the white races.

Hancock noted that Smuts believed that the whites in South Africa needed to exercise power over the black population responsibly or arouse feelings of resentment, and JC Smuts (the younger) wrote that his father was 'a man of broad-minded tolerance.'<sup>16</sup> Yet there are questions about his racial beliefs, such as those were raised by those world figures who were to give South Africa the mandate. Would Smuts be 'broad-minded', or would his son's words fade before the task charged to him? Smuts may have exposed his own feelings by writing that blacks 'have the simplest minds...and are almost animal-like in the simplicity of their minds and ways.' The issue of the treatment of indigenous people became very important in the administration of the mandate.

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<sup>16</sup> J.C. Smuts, Jan Christiaan Smuts, p. 3

But we cannot make the mistake of taking a man's whole life, diverse opinions, and changing ideas, and then create a static picture of him. Therefore three important periods of Smuts's life up to his involvement with South-West Africa need to be outlined.

### HIS EARLY LIFE: 1882-1915

The first years of Smuts's life were spent in small towns in the Swartland of the Cape Colony. However, his family was quite influential and he eventually went to school at Stellenbosch and then to Cambridge. The dichotomy between his years in a strong Afrikaner environment and those spent in England were evident to him. It was during the period after his return that he supported Rhodes so strongly.

The Jameson raid was a blow to Smuts, especially when Rhodes was implicated. He had to question whether or not the Afrikaner could trust the Briton. He felt, however, that there was nobody he could trust in the Cape Colony<sup>17</sup>. For that reason, he moved to the Transvaal. But this early period was important because between Stellenbosch, Cambridge, and Riebeeck West, Smuts's opinions were being formed.

On 20 January, 1897, Smuts moved to the Transvaal. By the beginning of June, he was the State Attorney for the Transvaal Republic and he formed one of the two great partnerships of his life - as the right-

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<sup>17</sup> Hancock, Smuts, p. 60.

hand man of President Kruger. For a while, he was even considered for State Secretary, but it was decided that he was too young.<sup>18</sup>

Smuts could have had a long career in the service of the Transvaal, but it was destined not to happen. By 1898, conflict between the British Empire (or more correctly its administrators at the Cape) and the Transvaal and Free State Republics was coming to a head. It is not necessary to discuss the whole debate on the conflict here, but the important point is that Smuts, in his capacity of an officer of the Transvaal government, opposed the conflict. At the pre-war conference at Bloemfontein between Milner and Kruger he argued for peace, and in a letter to Hofmeyer on June 13th, he said 'for the sake of peace, the Republic is ready to go still further along the road of concession.' He also expressed his belief in the British instilled in him during his stay at Cambridge. He wrote to a friend 'England will never go to war when she knows what the true opinion of the Colonial Afrikaner is...'.<sup>19</sup> Smuts supported the continuing of concessions and trusted that the other side of England would come through, until the last moment when necessity dictated that the man of peace should become a man of war.

The Boer war was a very important event for the purposes of this dissertation because it was this war which made Smuts the General out of Smuts the politician. But the Boer War was important in Smuts's development for more than just military reasons. The end of the war had seen Lord Campbell-Bannerman come to power in England, and South Africans were waiting to see what his actions towards the defeated

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<sup>18</sup> Hancock, *Smuts*, p. 68. in the end F.W. Reitz got the job, with the understanding that Smuts would get his turn later.

<sup>19</sup> SP I/95.

Republics would be. On the 7th of February, 1906, Smuts wrote to Campbell-Bannerman,

Do you want friends or enemies? You can have the Boers for friends, and they have proved what quality their friendship may mean. I pledge the friendship of my colleagues and myself if you wish it. You can choose to make them enemies, and possibly have another Ireland on your hands.<sup>20</sup>

During the years between 1902 and 1914 Campbell-Bannerman and his contemporaries in British Government made their choice - to help the Afrikaners rebuild after the war, to assist in the creation of the Union, and to grant them, along with the other Dominions, certain rights. In 1915, the effect those promises had on Smuts, and other South Africans, would bear fruit.

The third period of importance in Smuts's life up to the beginning of this dissertation is the years between the Treaty of Vereeniging which marked the end of the Boer War and the beginning of World War One in 1914. During most of this period, Smuts was involved in the creation of the Union - something he fought for against taciturn Afrikaners and imperialist Britons alike. It was here that Smuts's dedication to the union of the two peoples and his ability to seem to represent both was most in use. Later, Smuts was to invite the Germans of South-West Africa to join this white alliance.

When General Botha was elected the first Prime Minister of the Union, Smuts quickly took the role of right-hand man again, forming the second great friendship of his life. Contemporary views portrayed Botha as the gregarious leader and Smuts as the cunning organizer.

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Hancock, Smuts, Vol.2 p. 5.

Smuts's role as Defense Minister is the most interesting point of this period for our purposes. After the 1910 election, which was a qualified victory for Botha's Nationalists - he took on the administration of three departments: Interior, Mines, and Defense. It was between 1911 and 1912 that he produced the Defence Act that was to set up an army for the Union outside of the British troops stationed there. The Defense Act created the Permanent Force.<sup>21</sup> The Permanent Force was vital to the upcoming campaign in South-West Africa because, as Smuts knew, in the event of war British troops would, for the most part, be withdrawn to fight on a European front.

The Defense Act was a well-thought-out document. Smuts provided for five regiments of the Permanent Force, which were to be mounted riflemen, a unit both Afrikaners and the British inhabitants of South Africa were used to forming. It also led to the creation of a Citizen Force, basically commando groups which could be raised in time of war and supplied by the government. Lastly, it provided that the Minister of Defense (namely Smuts) would serve as Commander-in-Chief in case of war. This was to have great effect on the South African involvement in World War One. Smuts was also interested in aircraft and deeply concerned with building up supplies for the army. The effect of this modernization was to create an army which could be used for campaigns in southern Africa for involvement wherever needed - they would see service in German South-West Africa and German East Africa, and some would volunteer to fight in Europe. This army would fight in the name of the British Empire, for the cause of South African expansion, and to further the policies of Louis Botha and Jan Smuts.

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<sup>21</sup> Collyer, The Campaign in South-West Africa, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1937, p. 18.

This brings us to 1914. Botha and Smuts were facing a schism in the Afrikaner front with Hertzog and others moving on a more nationalist track. International politics was becoming quite dangerous, and Smuts's correspondences were full of letters from his fellow peacemakers writing 'I do trust you are not going to help the many who are trying to pick a quarrel with Germany'<sup>22</sup>, while others were urging him to ensure that 'we...be strong enough to defend our country against anyone whatever, and to prevent South Africa from becoming the battle-ground of Europe.'<sup>23</sup> War had not yet broken out, but Smuts was being urged to both reduce and expand the South African military. Meanwhile, Broderbond leaders saw the upcoming conflict as a change to establish Afrikaner hegemony, and pro-British activists urged South Africa to fulfill her duty as a Dominion. The testing time for the new Union had come, and Smuts quickly saw that it involved South Africa's neighbor to the north - the German South-West African colony.

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<sup>22</sup> SP 8/41. Smuts's duality as soldier and peacemaker created friendships with such pacifists as English Quakers like Emily Hobhouse, who wrote this letter, and committed hawks such as C.P. Crewe and Campbell-Bannerman.

<sup>23</sup> SP 9/75. From M.T. Steyn.

#### CHAPTER 4: THE CAMPAIGN OF 1914-1915

On 4 August, 1914, Great Britain entered the First World War in response to German violation of Belgian neutrality - among other factors. England and Germany were now enemies.

This change in international relations necessitated a major alteration of the relations between the Union and the German colonies in the region - South-West Africa and German East Africa. But what exactly was the Union's duty as a dominion of the British Empire and how did that alter their relationship with the Germans?

#### SMUTS AND THE QUESTION OF WAR

On the first day of Britain's entry into the war, the Union government started to perform its obligation to the Empire - offering to release British troops from service in South Africa while replacing them with part of the extensive Union Defense Force created by Smuts two years earlier.<sup>2</sup> The South African government was just doing its duty, but it was not exactly clear where that duty ended.

Smuts's views had been clearly expressed at the Imperial Defence Conference in 1909, when the question of the position of dominions in case of war was discussed. Smuts's view, which prevailed, was that 'each part of the Empire [should be] willing to make its preparations on such lines as will enable it, should it so desire, to take its share in the general defence of the Empire'<sup>3</sup> The *should it so desire* phrase makes it seem as if

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<sup>2</sup> Hancock, Smuts, v1/p. 379.

<sup>3</sup> British Parliamentary Papers, Cd 4948 of 1909, p. 33.

Smuts was reserving the right of dominions not to join in. In fact, by encouraging the dominions to prepare for war, Smuts was preparing them to defend the Empire if necessary.

In one of his many letters to Arthur Gillett in England, Smuts gave further evidence of his opinions on the war. In this letter, he held England blameless for the war, pointing out that Campbell-Bannerman (the Prime Minister in 1907) had tried to limit armaments and had undertaken to aid France in the North Atlantic in return for French help in the Mediterranean and that England could not pull back from its obligations. Smuts did not censure the German people, writing:

I love German thought and culture and hope it will yet do much for mankind. But a stern limit must be set to her political system which is a menace to the world...<sup>4</sup>

Although Smuts expressed appreciation for the German culture, he condemned what he saw as her expansionism and imperialism, and saw the English as doing their 'duty', even expressing it in terms of good and evil. About the upcoming campaign in South-West Africa, Smuts was very clear that 'such was the wish of the English Government and Botha and I are not the men to desert England in this dark hour ... we are doing our duty'.<sup>5</sup>

Others in the Union Cabinet had different opinions - notably Barry Hertzog, who wanted to keep South Africa out of European wars. His opposition will be important further on. Many of the Afrikaner generals, such as the Defense Force commander Christian Beyers, were opposed to fighting a war for their old enemy England, especially against Germany. Henning Klopper summed up their opinions when he pointed out that

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<sup>4</sup> SP 12/162. 27th September 1914.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

after the Anglo-Boer war, the Germans had collected £80,000 for the destitute Afrikaners

And Botha knelt down before the man who presented the money and he thanked him. Yet he was the man who declared war on the German forces in South West. That made us bitter. How can you do that? How can you be such a hypocrite?<sup>6</sup>

To Klopper, 'Smuts sold us to the British. He became an Anglophile ... Smuts misled Botha.'<sup>7</sup> The Nationalists, under Hertzog, expressed this feeling very clearly in opposing the upcoming war.

Smuts, however, was firm in his convictions and his support for the British. The question of 'why' he wanted the war has been approached by many historians such as Maynard Swanson and W.K. Hancock, and several suggestions have been advanced. Each of these theories consider certain aspects of Smuts's personality and loyalties.

#### SMUTS'S REASONS FOR SUPPORTING THE CAMPAIGN

In his biography of Smuts, Hancock often stresses Smuts's loyalty and emotion, believes that Smuts supported the war out of duty - both to England and to former Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman, his friend. In 1906, Smuts approached Campbell-Bannerman and said the English 'can have Boers for friends, and they have proven what quality their friendship may mean', or they could choose to be enemies 'and possibly have another Ireland on [their] hands'.<sup>8</sup>

Campbell Bannerman had chosen friendship, and he and Smuts had sought to bring Boer and Briton together in South Africa. Thus

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<sup>6</sup> Harrison, White Tribe of Africa, p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Hancock, Smuts, v2/p. 5.

Hancock suggests that 'That same night, Campbell-Bannerman made his choice of having the Boers for friends. Eight years later [WWI], Smuts made his choice of proving what Boer friendship could mean'.<sup>9</sup>

Smuts, speaking of Botha and Campbell-Bannerman, said that magnanimity on both their parts paved the way for cooperation in the First World War. On their meeting, he wrote:

Greatness of soul met greatness of soul, and a page was added to the story of human statesmanship ... seven years later Campbell-Bannerman had passed away, but Botha was once more a commander-in-chief in the field, this time, however, in common cause with Britain and over forces in which Dutch and British were comrades<sup>10</sup>

Hancock, supported by Smuts's own words, reveals to us his opinion on how the General's own strong sense of loyalty and desire for British-Boer unity was a factor in pursuing the South-West Africa Campaign. Both Botha and Smuts, Hancock argues, were repaying the kindness of Campbell-Bannerman and doing their duty to the British Empire. However, loyalty and duty are not enough to explain why the Union government, and specifically Jan Smuts, went beyond their obligation to release troops for Europe, and perhaps knock out the radio tower at Swakopmund, and instead led a wholesale invasion of first South-West Africa and then East Africa - acts which did not particularly aid the British struggle, but instead sapped potential Imperial troops from the European front! Therefore while Hancock's argument helps show why Smuts would be committed to the war, it does not explain why he and Botha invaded South-West Africa.

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<sup>9</sup> Hancock, *Smuts*, v2/p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Glasgow High School Magazine. Campbell-Bannerman Centenary* (June 1948), quoted in Hancock, *Smuts*, v1/p216.

Certainly, as historian Gerald L'Ange wrote, 'Some of the Dutch-speaking South Africans.... shared his belief that, having made a pact with the British ... they were honour bound to help it fight its wars. '<sup>11</sup> However, the argument that the war was an exercise in Anglo-Boer unity is questionable because the decision to invade South-West Africa provoked an Afrikaner rebellion in the Transvaal and Orange Free State, and even L'Ange admits that many of the Afrikaners joined the campaign out of loyalty to Botha and the sheer love of a fight.<sup>12</sup>

Another often used argument was that the Union invaded South-West Africa for security reasons - that Smuts and Botha were afraid to have a German colony on their northern border. Certainly Smuts made use of this argument, especially when addressing British politicians and leaders. In his famous 1917 Speech to Parliament in England, he said:

You are aware of the great German scheme which existed before the war, and which no doubt is still in the background of many minds in Germany, of creating a great Central African Empire.... which would have a very large population and... in which it would be possible to train one of the most powerful black armies of the world<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly, Smuts was aware that the Union could raise ten times the troops that the Germans had stationed in South-West Africa. In fact, he had taken part in a war in which lightly armed Afrikaner commandos had held the largest professional army in the world at bay for four years, so it seems doubtful he was afraid of a small force of Germans with unreliable native troops invading his strongly held nation - even with the help of a minority of the Afrikaners.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> L'ange, G., Urgent Imperial Service, Ashanti Publishing, Rivonia, 1991, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> L'ange quotes Coen Brits, who wrote to Botha "My men are ready; who do we fight - the English or the Germans". Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Smuts, JC, War Time Speeches, p. 91-2.

<sup>14</sup> The South Africans eventually fielded 40,000 troops against the 7,000 in South West Africa

Though Smuts used the security argument time and again, both before the campaign and during the Peace Conference negotiations, he did so only publicly. For the British (and later all the allies), security from the German threat internationally was a major point, and to much of the South African public fear of the Germans was a powerful motivational force in support of the campaign. However, the security issue is not significantly discussed in Smuts's private papers. Security was not the main factor for Smuts.

Most of Smuts's letters and discussions seem to ignore this factor and instead point to an intense belief in expansion. As pointed out before, Smuts often talked of 'Civilizing Africa... from South Africa,' and creating a country in which 'it will be almost impossible to use the word South any more except in reminder of our original starting point'.<sup>15</sup>

Where did his expansionism come from? Some called Smuts a British Imperialist, others point to Smuts's Afrikaner heritage of trekking to new places, but Hancock believes they were combined. 'From Kruger and Rhodes and even from their former British conquerors they [Smuts and Botha] had inherited an expansionist concept of security - wider frontiers for the Union and an economic and political hegemony extending beyond those frontiers far into equatorial Africa.'<sup>16</sup>

While Smuts had expansionism ingrained from both his British and Afrikaans heritages, neither heritage alone explains his desire to occupy South-West Africa. In Chapter 3, I advanced the argument that Smuts's expansionist leanings were in support of the creation of a Southern African superstate. When opposed by Hertzog, Beyers, and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 90

<sup>16</sup> Hancock, Smuts, v2/p4.

others, Smuts wrote that he had 'faith in South Africa'.<sup>17</sup> It was for the benefit of South Africa, not for Britain and not solely for the Afrikaans, that Smuts supported war.

Botha and Smuts were partners in this endeavor. It would be a mistake to ignore Botha's influence (as Prime Minister) in shaping the South-West African campaign. Botha and Smuts agreed on the invasion. Botha stated that even if the British government had not asked the Union to attack South-West Africa, it 'would have done so on its own accord'.<sup>18</sup> Smuts, two weeks later, said 'There is now the prospect of the Union becoming almost double its present size... and we shall leave to our children a huge country, in which to develop a type for themselves.'<sup>19</sup>

Smuts's reasons for supporting the South-West campaign were typical of his objectives. When Smuts later led the attack on German East Africa, it was not in order to take that country for the Union and remove it as a threat, but to hold it to trade with the Portuguese for Mocambique.<sup>20</sup> In both campaigns, the German threat and British objectives were secondary to Smuts's expansionist tendencies.

Obviously this expansionism in South-West Africa did have a purpose beyond just 'expanding' politically. There were economic considerations as well. South-West Africa had the best port facilities on the west coast of sub-Saharan Africa. The territory had large cattle stocks as well. Even more importantly, South-West African mines produced copper, lead, zinc, mica, vanadium, graphite, rock salt, and other minerals,

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<sup>17</sup> SP 12/145 to J.X. Merriman, 2 October, 1914.

<sup>18</sup> 'The South West Africa Campaign' The Cape Times, front page, August 5, 1915.

<sup>19</sup> Millin, S., General Smuts, Faber and Faber, London, 1936, p327. Unfortunately, the book is not footnoted and I have been unable, as Maynard Swanson was before me, to find the actual speech.

<sup>20</sup> Hyam, p. 155.

and diamonds worth £9,250,250 had been mined between 1908 and 1914.<sup>21</sup> The Imperial Government was aware of this, as was the Union. These factors can, however, be explained as part of Smuts and Botha's expansionist plans. The many resources in South-West Africa were as desirable to the Union's leaders as the land itself.

N.G. Garson wrote that 'Smuts's African policy amounted to the single-minded pursuit of formal expansion from the Union as base'.<sup>22</sup> This is simplistic, for Smuts's policies were more complex than that, but he certainly saw South-West Africa as a logical extension of the Union's reach. Not only was Smuts prepared to theorize about it, he was prepared to take action, and from 1910 onwards, as Minister of Defense, Smuts planned and carried out the actions which prepared the Union for war and was instrumental as a leader in the campaign for South-West Africa.

### THE DECISION TO FIGHT

After the South African Party's slim victory in the 1910 elections, Smuts had assumed the roles of Minister of Interior, Minister of Mines, and Minister of Defense. His main role as Minister of Defense was to prepare the Union for a war that he, among others, foresaw. Throughout 1911 and 1912 he worked on a Defense Act which changed the Union's defense forces.

The bill<sup>23</sup> was well thought out. It had as its general principle the idea that 'every [man is] liable to war service'. However, Smuts did not intend to draft the population. Instead, every man between 15 and 30

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<sup>21</sup> British Foreign Office publication, South West Africa, September 1914, p. 72.

<sup>22</sup> Garson, NG, 'Smuts and Africa', p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> SP CXI/3, December 1911, South African Defence Bill

years of age would serve either in the Active Citizen Force or in a Rifle Association, both of which drew on the heritage of Boer commandos and English light horsemen in creating groups that were both military and social in nature. The intent was to create a large group of trained men for military service.

In 1913, this bill created 44,193 voluntary registrants, and in 1915, the Active Citizen Force was able to provide the preponderance of the expeditionary force.<sup>24</sup>

Just as importantly, when the British Government declared war, the Union was able to offer to release the British troops to fight in the European theatre and replace them with its own. On 7 August, the British Secretary of State responded, and in a message to Governor-General Buxton not only accepted the offer but also asked whether the South Africans 'if [they] desire and feel themselves able to seize such parts of German South-West Africa as will give them command of Swakopmund, Luderitzbucht, and the wireless stations there or in the interior,'<sup>25</sup> could do so.

On 11 August, the Union government agreed and Smuts began to organize the Active Citizen Force 'for contingencies.'<sup>25</sup> None-the-less, the issue was not settled because there was opposition to the campaign both amongst the population and within Parliament. The main opposition came from Barry Hertzog's nationalist party within Parliament, and from segments of the Afrikaner rural population (some of whom went into open revolt). Hertzog argued that the Union had no duty to fight a foreign war, and that his duty was to his people, not the Empire.

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<sup>24</sup> Collyer, The Campaign in German South West Africa, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, no.6.

Smuts, arguing for the campaign, presented a different view. 'Our mother countries have been attacked by an enemy,' he said, 'we have Belgian, French and English blood.'<sup>26</sup> He warned of the German threat to South Africa, and lectured on the Union's duty to fight. He never mentioned what might happen after the war, but Botha had already asked the Imperial government what the status of South-West Africa would be if captured by the Union.<sup>27</sup> The resolution to attack South-West Africa was passed by a vote of 92 to 12, and South Africa was at war with Germany.<sup>28</sup>

### SMUTS'S ROLE IN THE CAMPAIGN

Smuts was no longer a general, but a statesman. Still, his role in the upcoming campaign was vital. Botha's second-in-command, General Collyer, discerned that the Minister of Defense was the Supreme Commander of the campaign.<sup>29</sup> The Reuter's correspondents attached to the force pointed out his importance, even to naming their book (released in 1916) How Botha and Smuts Conquered German South West.<sup>30</sup> Yet, Smuts commanded in the field for only a month and a half. It would be

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<sup>26</sup> The Star, September 10, 1914, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> British Command Papers 1914-1916 Cd.7873, Correspondance to the Proposed Naval and Military Expedition against German South West Africa, no 45.

<sup>28</sup> L'ange, Urgent Imperial Service, p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> Collyer, The Campaign in German South-West Africa, p. 9. This begs the question... if Botha commanded in the field, Smuts was his superior. Yet Botha, as Prime Minister, was Smuts's superior as Minister of Defense. Once again, this relationship can only be called a partnership.

<sup>30</sup> Rayner, WS, and WW O'Shaughnessy, How Botha and Smuts Conquered German South West Africa, Simkin, Marshall, Hamilton, and Kent, London, 1916.

easy to either discount Smuts's role or to declare, from Collyer's statement, that he was the central figure of the invasion. While Smuts played an important part in the campaign, he was not the only principal figure in the occupation.

Botha, by late September, had decided to take full command of the forces in the field. With Botha commanding the expeditionary force, Smuts had 'the task of administrative and military organisation at the seat of government in Pretoria'<sup>31</sup>. The recruitment, disposition, provisioning, and officering of the army fell to him.

As early as August, Smuts was hard at work on this task. A series of letters to and from Brigadier General Charles Crewe<sup>32</sup> reveal Smuts's recruitment work. 'I strongly urge commanding officers must come from the Permanent Forces or Police....', <sup>33</sup> was one of Crewe's pieces of advice. More advice came from other officers - advice on recruitment, provisioning, all aspects of war. Smuts also communicated with the British high command, such as his request for more supplies on August 17th, when he wrote to Sir James Murray: 'Ministers are being pressed to take active steps in German South-West Africa and yet, when they ask for certain equipment from the Imperial stores, they are informed that the only things that can be given to them are vehicles whose serviceableness is under grave suspicion.'<sup>34</sup>

Although he had people to help him and superiors to request aid from, Smuts was thus the person responsible for all these details - Officers

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<sup>31</sup> Hancock, *Smuts*, v1/p385.

<sup>32</sup> Chief recruiting officer for the Union, a British officer during the Anglo-Boer War.

<sup>33</sup> SP 12/33, 12 August, 1914.

<sup>34</sup> SP 12/138, 17 August, 1914, to General Sir James Wolfe Murray.

wrote to him for supplies of arsenite soda to defeat flies, for details of the whereabouts of their horses, even to complain about each other.

Then, in October rebellion broke out amongst a group of Afrikaners under General Beyers and de Wet who opposed the campaign. Smuts advised Botha to declare martial law, which was declared the next day<sup>35</sup> but with Botha planning to leave the country, the implementation was left up to Smuts. One of his wiser decisions was to defeat the rebels using loyal Afrikaner troops, rather than levies from Natal or the Cape, which helped isolate the rebellion. It was also Smuts who appointed Coen Brits to command the forces putting down the rebellion.<sup>36</sup>

The Germans were not idle during this time, and while preparing their defenses, in December issued a statement saying:

The German Government never intended permanently to occupy the South African Union, and desires that the hostilities forced upon her by the South African Union should cease. So long as the Union abstains from further hostilities against German territory and evacuates the territory already invaded, South Africans may establish a neutral state which will be officially recognised by Germany, as also its political independence and territorial integrity.<sup>37</sup>

However, the South Africans had already decided to proceed. Forces had already landed at Luderitzbucht (18 September) and had marched across land from the border as well (23 September). Smuts was now involved in moving men, horses, equipment, and even railway cars and ties to South-West Africa to support the invasion.

Equally importantly, Smuts was issuing general orders promoting and transferring officers, appointing men to positions, creating and decommissioning units, and generally coordinating the invasion's logistics

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<sup>35</sup> Hancock, Smuts, v1/p386.

<sup>36</sup> L'ange, Urgent Imperial Service, p. 53

<sup>37</sup> SP13/54, undated December, 1914, article from unnamed newspaper.

while Botha was on the northern route of attack.<sup>38</sup> By this time, the South Africans had four forces in the field. McKenzie's 'Central' force was made out of the troops operating from Luderitzbuch. The 'Southern' force under Van Deventer was to strike North overland from Upington in the Union to join with him near Keetmanshoop. The Eastern Force would march from Kuruman into GSWA. A small force of mounted rifleman, it would have to cross the Kalahari. Meanwhile, General Botha himself would command the northern force on its march from Swakopmund to Windhuk along the central railway spine. The primary constituency of all these forces was a strong cavalry contingent totalling 13000 men - commandos and light horse.

During the early months of 1915, Smuts was occupied running the army - and the country - from his desk in Pretoria. Much of his time he was fielding requests from commanders - even Botha who pronounced: 'my advance... depends solely on measure of assistance which can be afforded by Defence Headquarters.'<sup>39</sup>

Smuts, however competently he performed his job, chafed at being confined to his desk. He wrote a lugubrious letter to Henry Hull complaining about spending his time on supplies, Parliament ('You are well out of it') and how hard it was to deal with Hertzogites and Labour, and commenting wistfully on the campaign, 'Now that you have broken the strong defensive line at Jakalswater and Reit the enemy will probably retire...'.<sup>40</sup> Two weeks earlier, Botha had written 'Stand fast and hurry through [parliament] and come in yourself at one end.'<sup>41</sup> Smuts began to

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<sup>38</sup> All orders went out under Smuts's name. See Union Defence Forces *General Orders* 1914-1915 nos. 1-64.

<sup>39</sup> SP 13/10A 3 February, 1915, Botha to Smuts.

<sup>40</sup> SP 13/137, 25 March, 1915.

<sup>41</sup> SP 13/11, 9 March, 1915.

make his plans and in early April, abandoned his post and took command of the Southern and Eastern forces.

It was Smuts's responsibility was to clean up the German forces in the south centered around Keetmanshoop. He was a political leader as well as a general and his biggest problem was to reconcile MacKenzie (an excellent cavalry commander, but very strongly pro-British) and Lukin (whose brigade was mostly made up of Free Staters). Aware of the delicacy of the situation, Smuts decided to put Lukin senior to MacKenzie and putting MacKenzie in charge of an all-cavalry brigade, as if it were a promotion. In another politically motivated move, Smuts released all the drafted Cape burghers and the six-month enlisted men in the cavalry,<sup>42</sup> a move guaranteed to appeal to the home front.

On the 17th of April, Governor-General Buxton informed the Imperial Secretary of State that Smuts 'ha[d] officially taken command of the Southern, Eastern and Central Force.'

He is making an advance in force in three columns composed of mounted men from the Southern and Eastern Force; the object is to surround and capture Keetmanshoop and the railway north of it.<sup>43</sup>

Smuts now prepared his plan to take several large brigades of cavalry to Aus, to take it quickly with overwhelming force and then move on to Keetmanshoop. Smuts's son, in his biography of his father, alleges that Smuts's subsequent flanking attack on Aus was Jannie's stroke of genius.

My father avoided frontal attacks. He was an inveterate exponent, like all Boers, of the enveloping flanking movement. Thus Aus, an

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<sup>42</sup> SP CXII/34, 5 April, 1915, official telegram to General Botha.

<sup>43</sup> Governor-General 9/59/83, of 17 April, 1915.

important point on the road to Keetmanshoop, though well held and tactically strong, fell without trouble.<sup>44</sup>

This does not seem to be true. Botha convinced him to change his plans, which he considered faulty, and advised: 'Where you want to go in, smaller commando groups should go it.... You should... form two wings out of the cavalry.'<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, Smuts's leadership was quite good. He did much of his own scouting, and succeeded in several victories after Aus. On the 20th of April, Kabus was taken by Colonel van Deventer, whilst the main force under MacKenzie took Gibeon on the 27th after a hard fight. Most of the Germans, however, escaped.<sup>46</sup> On the next day, Smuts issued a proclamation 'announcing that the Defense forces of the Union of South Africa were in occupation of enemy territory to the latitude of Gibeon.'<sup>47</sup>

The result of this was that the southern campaign was basically over. On the 29th, Smuts went to a meeting with Botha in Swakopmund and it was decided that, his task done (though his hunger barely sated), he should return home. His letter to his old Cambridge lecturer, J. Wostelhome, shows his satisfaction:

I came back today from German South-West Africa where I had commanded the southern army of invasion, but we have occupied all that part of the enemy's country, so I have disbanded a large portion of my forces and sent the rest to assist Generall Botha in the north, and have myself returned to my civil duties.<sup>48</sup>

Smuts's return to the Union did not keep him from taking part in the war, however, and in May a new issue began to arise: the issue of

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<sup>44</sup> Smuts, *J.C. Smuts*, p. 157.

<sup>45</sup> SP 13/15 30 March, 1915, Botha to Smuts.

<sup>46</sup> Collyer, *The Campaign in German SWA, 1914-1915*, p. 91.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Rayner and O'Shaughnessy, *How Botha and Smuts Conquered South-West Africa*, p. 146.

<sup>48</sup> S P 13/146, 14 May, 1915.

surrender terms. Dr. Seitz, the German colony's governor, approached Botha with a letter in which he outlined the successes of Germany in Europe and called for an end to the bloodshed in Africa. 'South Africa is not so rich in men and capital as to be able to afford to throw away both uselessly in order to attain military victory... What has determined me to arrange a compromise is the fact that I as a member of the white race must use every means to stop further murdering of whites by natives,'<sup>48</sup> an argument he believed would appeal to his opponents.

Botha forwarded the letter to Smuts and discussed with him the reply, which suggested 'I am in entire sympathy with the desire expressed by Your Excellency to avoid any unnecessary shedding of blood and am prepared at any time to meet Your Excellency for discussion...'<sup>49</sup> Smuts and Lord Buxton approved the reply on the 15th, and Smuts added:

Any peace which does not involve surrender of German Forces would have bad effect politically in Union and lose us much prestige and would for future leave it open to Germans to argue that their country and army were never really conquered.<sup>50</sup>

There can be only one reason why this was important to Smuts. In order for South Africa to press its claim to legitimate sovereignty over South-West Africa, Smuts knew they must well and truly defeat the Germans without any trace of doubt - not for security reasons, but in order to claim the territory for the Union.

On May 20th, Botha met with Dr. Seitz and Colonel Franke, the commander of the German forces. At this meeting, the Germans proposed a cessation of hostilities, with both sides maintaining control

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<sup>48</sup> SP CXII/35

<sup>49</sup> SP CXII/36

<sup>50</sup> SP CXII/38, 15 May, 1915.

over the land they had taken. Botha, however, refused the offer and the South Africans decided to demand unconditional surrender, a notion which, for reasons explained above, was appealing to Smuts.

Thus the war was still continuing in June. However, Smuts the optimist decided that the Union had to start setting up *some* sort of civil government and appointed E.H.L. Gorges Chief Civil Secretary of the South-West African Protectorate.<sup>51</sup> The same proclamation created the position of Military Governor, also to be appointed by Smuts.

Things were proceeding apace in the field, and as July 1915 approached, Governor Seitz once again asked for surrender terms. On July 7th, Botha and Seitz met and laid out a proposal for a general armistice with five conditions: that the reservists were to be disbanded, the active troops collected in one place with their guns and batteries on them, the reserve batteries would be handed over, the police would be treated as active troops, and the Government of the German colony would hand over all property to the Union.

Smuts reviewed the terms, and disagreed with the second condition. 'Malan and Watt here agree with me that second term of agreement impossible as it keeps armed German Army in existence... and publication of such peace will have disastrous political effect after our complete victory...'<sup>52</sup> Smuts was determined that South-West African should be unreservedly South African, and his objection was agreed to in the final armistice.

On the 9th of July, 1915, Dr. Seitz and the German government of South-West Africa surrendered to the Union. From then until the 31st of

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<sup>51</sup> South African Minister of Defense, Proclamation of 11 July, 1915.

<sup>52</sup> SP LXII/95, to David Graaff in Cape Town for opinion on armistice terms.

December, 1920, a military government was to rule the Protectorate under martial law.

### SUMMARY

Smuts was involved in some way in every part of the campaign - the planning, carrying it out, the German surrender and the advent of martial law. However, he had a much more important role in the decision to invade and in the conclusion of the campaign than in the actual battle.

It was Smuts, along with Botha, who was the most vehement proponent of the invasion. Although his commitment to the British, his hope for Anglo-Boer cooperation, and his wariness of the Germans on the Union's northern border all contributed to his decision, the invasion was mostly an exercise in expansionism, and he fought for it in Parliament and against the Afrikaans rebels. He was also instrumental, as Minister of Defense, in preparing the nation for war.

The invasion itself was led by Botha, and while Smuts held an important position in Pretoria, his role could have been carried out by another capable leader. He was a partner in the invasion, but his influence was less important here as he became an administrator and bureaucrat, rather than an ideologue.

In refusing certain terms of the German surrender, Smuts played a very important part in ending the campaign. Looking to the future and without the benefit of knowing there would be a British victory, he saw that an armed German force might threaten the future of the Union's administration in South-West Africa, and argued argued against the

German's request to keep their reserves armed - a provision Botha may very well have otherwise accepted.

Smuts was also able to appoint the Military Governor and Civil Secretary of the territory, and appointed administrators who would be sympathetic to his plans for South-West Africa.

### FROM CAMPAIGN TO MANDATE

Smuts had assumed that since South Africa had been conquered by the Union, it would become South African territory after the war. However, the Imperial government had made it clear that 'any territory now occupied must be at the disposal of the Imperial Government for purposes of an ultimate settlement at the conclusion of the war'.<sup>53</sup> Thus Smuts knew his job was not completed just because the Union had conquered this territory.

The next two year Smuts's task was therefore to convince the British and South Africans that the Union should control this territory. In England, he promised that a greater South Africa would be a regional stabilizer, and declared 'a new Monroe Doctrine for the South, such as to protect it against European militarism.'<sup>54</sup> He also opposed the return of the German colonies, and the first of the Empire's War Aims he declared was the termination 'of the German Colonial system with a view to the future security of all communications vital to the British Empire.'<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> British Command Papers 1914-1916, Code 7873 Correspondances on the Proposed Expedition against German South West Africa, p4.

<sup>54</sup> Speech to the Royal Geographical Society, January 28, 1918, in War Time Speeches, p. 71-84.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p31.

Smuts also had to defend his relationship with the Imperial government back home. He defended Botha and Himself when the Nationalists attacked them as British, saying 'We want one South Africa, one united people, and on October 15th, 1916, remarked 'I am a man of Peace.. [and] I shall work with my last breath for the good of South Africa.'<sup>56</sup>

At first his position with the British government was very defensible, for in February 1916 he was asked to command the Imperial forces in East Africa (i.e. Tanganyika).<sup>57</sup> This campaign was more appealing to the average South African than sending troops to France. It was much closer, and had as its ends tangible results. John Merriman, a member of the Union Assembly, advised Smuts that 'if [East Africa] were conquered by us we could probably effect an exchange with Mozambique and so consolidate our territories south of the Zambesi and Kunene.'<sup>58</sup>

Smuts could therefore logically argue that he was working for the Union. However, whilst the campaign lingered on in East Africa, in January 1917, Smuts allowed himself to be lured to London to work for the British government.

'The suggestion had been put to Smuts more than once in 1915 that he ought to go to London,'<sup>59</sup> writes Hancock in his biography of Smuts. However, Smuts had always seen his duty as being in South Africa. Hancock remarks that it was Botha who asked Smuts to go to London<sup>60</sup> ,

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<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Smuts, *JC Smuts*, p159.

<sup>57</sup> He was first asked in November, 1915, but refused because the Union was unsettled after the close election. However, he took over after General Smith-Dorrien fell ill at Cape Town.

<sup>58</sup> SP 13/89, Merriman to Smuts, undated but probably November 1915.

<sup>59</sup> Hancock, *Smuts*, v1/p408.

<sup>60</sup> Hancock, *Smuts*, v1/p423, the author mentions a telegram from Botha, although a June letter from Jan Smuts to his wife reads "You know I have been asked to attend the War Cabinet regularly and, with General Botha's permission, I have agreed, making it seem much more Smuts's position.. SP 18/281, 9th June, 1917.

and the reason was the Imperial Conference being held with representatives from all the Dominions at that time. By mid June, Smuts was a full member of the War Cabinet.

Now there was some basis to the charge that he was betraying the Afrikaners for the British could be laid at his feet. But it was really an unfair charge. On the 10th of May, Smuts refused an offer to administrate Palestine for the British Government<sup>61</sup> even though both the British Government and the Union Cabinet advised him to accept it. On the 19th of that month, the Bishop of Ossory, along with others, urged him to take charge of the situation in Ireland 'Some... have suggested you should take a hand in finding a solution for the Irish problem... a task that has broken many hearts and reputations.'<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister himself urged Smuts to become chairman of an Irish Convention.

Smuts saw his denials as part of his almost mystical connection with South Africa. 'I have today declined the Palestine command, ' he wrote to M.C. Gillett, 'I was taken on a high hill and shown the kingdoms of the world. And I have renounced them.'<sup>63</sup> The biblical reference is obvious. Smuts did choose South Africa over all other countries - even the British Empire. But he was not to return home, for the war was coming to an end and he was to play a large part in the settlement at its termination - and a new order for South Africa, South-West Africa, and the world.

Foremost in his mind remained the question of South-West Africa. 'for I expect a great row over the German colonies, in which we in

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<sup>61</sup> SP 15/76 10 May, 1917, and enclosure within.

<sup>62</sup> SP 16/155A 19 May, 1917.

<sup>63</sup> SP 18/366 31 May, 1917.

South Africa have such a radical interest,' he wrote home to his wife, explaining why he would not be returning home, ' I do not know what to do.'<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> SP 18/300 29 August, 1917, to S.M. Smuts.

## CHAPTER 5 - ANNEXATION IN ALL BUT NAME

It is a commonly quoted aphorism that possession is nine-tenths of the law. The physical possession of South-West Africa did not, however, necessarily confer ownership upon the Union. By July 1915, the military occupation of the territory complete, South Africa began the longer task of gaining legitimacy, in both foreign and domestic eyes, for the permanent annexation of the territory.

### THE TASK

Smuts was one statesman who did not believe that simply by occupying South-West Africa the Union had claimed it as a territory. He was sure, however, that it was in the Union's best interests to obtain it. From the beginning of the campaign in 1915, the South African objective had been to occupy the territory completely. A letter from Botha to Smuts in April expressed the view:

True we are doing a good deal by agreeing to take German South-West Africa, but we should not lose sight of the fact that we are taking the country for ourselves and not for anyone else.<sup>1</sup>

Smuts's own opinions coincided with this. The annexation of South-West Africa was a step towards the attainment of his goal of a super-African state as detailed in chapter 2. Smuts regarded it not only as 'a part of our Afrikaans heritage',<sup>2</sup> but as a logical extension of the Union. He knew, however, that conquering the territory was not enough. The Union would have to gain the acquiescence of both the British government and the Principle Allied and Associated Powers.

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<sup>1</sup> Smuts Papers 12/60. The letter is unfortunately undated.

<sup>2</sup> SP 12/143a.

With the victory of the Allies in 1918, Smuts's position on the War Council gave him a central role in the planning for the Paris Peace Conference. Smuts, however, turned down a role in the British deputation and instead joined his long-time political partner, Louis Botha, in leading the South African group.

Gaining international recognition of the Union's sovereignty in South-West Africa was a tough job, complicated by the possibility of having to deal with a supra-national organization - an idea which was by April 1918 becoming increasingly bandied-around by governments and private groups.

Smuts and his fellow ministers thus set out to write a manifesto on the future of South-West Africa - a document which would set forward their case. This document, entitled the Memorandum on the Question of the Future of South-West Africa<sup>3</sup>, was completed and given to the Governor-General marked secret, but with a note that Lord Buxton could publish it if he so chose. The document is significant because it outlined three of the main arguments that Smuts would use over the next year in his attempts to gain first the annexation and then the mandate for South-West Africa.

The memorandum based its argument for the South African annexation of South-West Africa on the threat of Germany. The first part of the threat was the danger the German colony posed to the Union and the British Empire.

It is the firm conviction of the great majority of the European population of the Union that if South-West Africa were restored to the Germans, the permanent security and peace of the Union and,

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<sup>3</sup> Governor-General's archives 269/3, dated 26 March 1918 and signed by Louis Botha.

indeed, of the whole of British South Africa would be gravely imperiled.<sup>4</sup>

The second argument presented by this document was the treatment of the indigenous people by the Germans, which 'lead to a continual state of dissatisfaction and unrest, culminating in risings, massacres, and brutalities'. The Union government promised to take the high ground. '[The natives] have openly declared their intention of leaving the territory if it is restored to the Germans'

This argument was not left to stand by itself. The British Foreign Office published a number of 'atrocities Blue Books' between 1916 and 1918 on the various wartime atrocities attributed to German troops, and one of these focused on the Herero massacres instigated by the Germans in 1904<sup>5</sup> as well as other alleged attacks by the German administration in South-West Africa.

The third argument presented in the Memorandum was the expansionist one - that South-West Africa was really a part of the continuous British territory in Southern Africa.

When German pretensions in Damaraland first became known in the Eighties, the Government of the Cape Colony repeatedly protested against the admission of a great European Power to territory....geographically and ethnologically...closely related to the rest of South Africa. The Orange River on the South did not constitute a natural barrier, while on the East it was impossible to fix any border except a line drawn arbitrarily through the desert.

This was a direct echo of Smuts's 'Northward Expansion' speech in 1917<sup>6</sup> and promoted the idea of hegemony of a region which was naturally united but which had been split by colonial powers - a hegemony under Union leadership.

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> British Command Papers 1914-1916, Cd. 8371 volXX.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 2

Having now gained military control of South-West Africa, it was the task of Smuts and the other members of his deputation to receive international support for the annexation - to establish legal sovereignty.

According to many historians of the Paris Peace Conference, such as William Louis, security was the major concern of Smuts, rather than expansionism.<sup>7</sup> He argues that Smuts based his arguments on economic and political factors, mainly the safety of the Union against aggression from European colonial powers. Maynard Swanson, on the other hand, saw Smuts's advocacy as both

popular and idealistic... he invoked the vision of a Greater South Africa that would give his own people a broadening national experience and his purpose in association with the liberal world empire he saw in the British dominions.<sup>8</sup>

Both liberal ideals and national security influenced Smuts, for he was a philosopher as well as the Union's Minister of Defense. Smuts was indeed driven by both pragmatic and moralistic zeals, but they were not confined to either the arguments set forth in the Memorandum nor those outlined by Swanson and Louis.

The major factors driving Smuts were, idealistically, his belief in the expansion of European civilization embodied in English, Afrikaans, and (we shall later see) German peoples; and, pragmatically, the political situation back in South Africa, both of which Smuts believed necessitated the annexation of South-West Africa, a point which will be argued later in this chapter.

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<sup>7</sup> Louis, William, 'The South West African Origins of the Sacred Trust, 1914-1919.', African Affairs, January 1-7, 1967.

<sup>8</sup> Swanson, Maynard, 'South West Africa in Trust', in Louis and Gifford's Britain and Germany in Africa, p. 636.

### SMUTS ENTERS THE DEBATE

Smuts joined the issue of the disposal of former German colonies in 1917, when, at the Imperial War Conference, he gave a speech at a banquet given by Parliament in which he said:

This great Commonwealth to which we all belong...is dependent for its very existence on world-wide communications or this Empire goes to pieces. Everywhere on your communications Germany has settled down; everywhere upon your communications you will find a German colony here and there, and the day would have come when your Empire would have been in very great jeopardy from your lines of communications being cut... Now one of the by-products of this war has been that the whole world outside Europe has been swept clear of the enemy.<sup>10</sup>

It is significant that Smuts *at this time* emphasized the need for security. As a delegate at the Imperial War Conference, Smuts emphasized not the changing nature of the Empire, but its continuing need for security. In the same speech, he says the member-states of the Empire 'have not fought for material gain, or territory; we have fought for security in the future.' But it is significant that he uses 'you' throughout this part of the speech - as if he were not a representative of part of the Empire, but of an independent country separate from it.

However, Smuts allowed himself to be convinced to join the British War Council later that same year, and on 14 November, 1918, published a 'Practical Suggestion' on the League of Nations.<sup>11</sup> The document is significant as a model for an international league, but is more important to this paper for what it says on mandates.

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<sup>10</sup> SP, Box H, No. 10, Speech at a banquet in his honour given by both Houses of Parliament on 15 May, 1917.

<sup>11</sup> Lt. Gen the Rt. Hon. J.C. Smuts, The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion, NY, New York, 1919.

Smuts discussed the League of Nations' role as a mandatory power for the first time, calling for 'No annexations, and the self determination of nations' for territories of Turkey and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but not for German colonies, especially those in the Pacific and Asia, which should be given to new colonists based on the interests of their populations, the Germans having proven, he wrote, brutal colonists.

In a speech to a number of American newspaper editors on 14 November, Smuts made his meaning more clear: 'Some of these [German] colonies are quite fairly and properly claimed and will have to be given to the British Dominions which conquered them, and for whose future development or security they are necessary'.<sup>12</sup> This was the argument which he used time and again to justify annexation for South-West Africa, and is quite clearly a reference to it.

In revealing his plans for the German colonies, Smuts drew a very clear line between the mandates he called for in Europe, to ease the defeat of the Central Powers, and the annexations of colonial territories which he felt must take place. This split gave rise to the traditional view of a man trapped by his own brilliance in suggesting the mandatory system and therefore giving up annexation of the territory he had conquered and wanted so badly.

Not long after this speech, the other man responsible for the creation of the mandate system, Woodrow Wilson, declared that 'he thought that the German colonies should be declared the common property of the League of Nations and [be] administered by small nations'<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> SP, Box H, No 27, Speech to American newspaper editors on 14 November, 1918.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Gail Maryse Cockram, South West African Mandate, p. 41.

This small difference in the ideas of two visionaries was to prove, in coming years, the battle ground of the mandate argument. Smuts, on the one hand, confined mandates to the Turkish and Austro-Hungarian territories, while Wilson extended them to former German colonies including, of course, South-West Africa.<sup>14</sup>

The Paris Peace Conference, in 1919, was a watershed year for the future of South-West Africa, as it was for many parts of the world. Smuts arrived as one of the head delegates for the South African delegation on 11 January<sup>15</sup>, having resigned his position on the War Cabinet.<sup>16</sup>

Smuts was undoubtedly happy to rejoin his own nation - for although having given good service to the Empire, he certainly regarded South Africa as his homeland. He immediately began to confer with Botha. Undoubtedly, one of the things they discussed during long walks in the woods on 11 and 12 January was public opinion back in South Africa. Patriotic vitriol at the victory had stepped to the forefront - in both the Afrikaans and the English language press. The *Cape Times* wrote on the 17 January:

If the British Ministry imagined... that the Union, New Zealand and Australia would consent to give back what they have taken from Germany merely in a spirit of lofty altruism and self-effacement, the British Ministry would be very much mistaken... public opinion in the Union will not be in the smallest degree impressed by what reads uncommonly like unctuous balderdash.<sup>17</sup>

This opinion was not isolated. The Rand Daily Mail called for the incorporation of South-West Africa in an almost identical article a year

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<sup>14</sup> Curry, 'Wilson, Smuts and the Versailles Settlement', *AHR*, LXVI, 4(1961), p. 977.

<sup>15</sup> SP v22/192, a letter to Arthur Clark.

<sup>16</sup> SP v20/207 'My dear Prime Minister. Now that the elections are over I must ask you to release me from further service on the War Cabinet.'

<sup>17</sup> *Cape Times* January 17, 1917, quoted in William Louis 1967.

later, just on the eve of the conference<sup>18</sup>. In addition, Sarah Millin quotes the 'Nationalists' as saying that Botha and Smuts had better not 'show themselves before the public of South Africa without German South-West in their pockets'.<sup>19</sup>

The agreement on the topic from both the British Union press and the Nationalists illustrates the importance control of South-West Africa was to Smuts's and Botha's political futures.

Smuts's dreams of Empire must have finally seemed open to him. Certainly Botha thought Mozambique might be available, as well as South-West Africa, and Smuts was still entertaining his plan for a trade with Portugal to bring that colony into the Union's control.<sup>20</sup> At the very least, they must have felt, it was within their right to demand South-West Africa, a territory conquered solely by Union troops at the request of the British government.

To help prove their point, in late August the South Africans had prepared another set of papers, which they distributed to the other delegates. This collection reiterated many of the points of the earlier Memorandum on the Question of the Future of South-West Africa, and was called the Memoranda on the Constitution and Government of the Protectorate of South-West Africa.<sup>21</sup> A large part of the paper was dedicated to 'The Case for not Restoring the Protectorate to Germany and for Transferring its Administration to the Union after Cession to the King by the Treaty of Peace'.

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<sup>18</sup> *Rand Daily Mail* November 25, 1918, quoted in Gail Cockram 1976.

<sup>19</sup> Millin, *General Smuts*, p. 240. Op. Cited.

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter III.

<sup>21</sup> SP CXV/2. These Memoranda were a bit premature, since the Protectorate had not yet been granted to the Union, but that is indicative of the confidence the South Africans enjoyed before the 1919 Peace Conference.

Once again, two of the main arguments were the 'complete unfitness with which the Germans in the Protectorate have, during their occupation thereof, displayed for the responsibility of governing its native inhabitants' and 'the evidence which is available as to Germany's designs after the conclusion of hostilities in the event of the restoration to her of her African colonies' - in other words, native concerns and security.

This time, however, another argument was added which was based 'on the consideration of the geographical position of the Protectorate'. This was the first time that the official documents of the South African delegation reflected the idea that the Union had a right to South-West Africa based solely on its position within their sphere of influence. This expansionism fit in perfectly with Smuts 'natural frontiers' idea, that South-West Africa was rightly a part of the southern African superstate, which the Union was fit to rule.

Smuts had, in a 1918 speech, called for a 'New Monroe Doctrine for the South...to protect it against European militarism.' Behind the sheltering wall of such a doctrine, they promise to build up a new peaceful world, not only for themselves but for the many millions of black people entrusted to their care.<sup>22</sup> He saw South African imperialism as protecting Southern Africa from such threats as German militarism, as being a shield for Africa.

Maynard Swanson, in his article 'South-West Africa in Trust'<sup>23</sup>, declares that 'Ultimately the claim for South-West Africa rested upon the two main pillars of national security and German misrule of dependent

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<sup>22</sup> Speech to the Royal Geographical Society, January 28, 1918, in Smuts, War Time Speeches, pp. 71-84.

<sup>23</sup> Swanson, Maynard, *South West Africa in Trust*, in Prosser, Gifford and William Louis, Britain and Germany in Africa, p. 637.

peoples. We have seen that many of the pre-conference documents surrounding the Union's arguments for annexation of the protectorate, as well as many of Smuts's speeches, use these arguments. As the peace conference began, Smuts's ideas of expansionism had been added to those of national security and native welfare. The idea of expansionism was not one as easily voiced to leaders such as Wilson, who were committed to new liberal ideals, but as Smuts began his task of securing South-West Africa for the Union, the ability of South Africa to expand northward was foremost in his mind.

### THE CONFERENCE

Jan Smuts has a reputation for being 'slick', or wily. But he never hid his intentions for South-West Africa. At the very beginning of the Peace Conference, he moved:

Having regard to the record of German administration in the colonies formerly belonging to the German Empire, and to the menace which the possession by Germany of submarine bases in many parts of the world would necessarily constitute to the freedom and security of all nations, the Allied and Associated powers are agreed that in no circumstances should any of the German colonies be restored to Germany<sup>24</sup>

Smuts was the kind of man who was always prepared and who always came to meetings or conferences with an idea on paper. At the South African Constitutional Convention, he had been the only delegate to arrive with a scheme for the constitution on paper<sup>25</sup> and the *Practical Suggestion* was also one of his blueprints, this time for the Versailles treaty. But Smuts was also a leader who knew how to compromise - he

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<sup>24</sup> Millin, General Smuts, v2/239. op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> Curry, 'Woodrow Wilson, Jan Smuts, and the Versailles Settlement'

knew that Anglo-Boer reconciliation was the only way to create a strong Union; and he was opposed to heavy fines against Germany which would cause resentment.<sup>26</sup> So while Smuts went into the Peace Conference with set ideas, he was very willing to compromise. Still, to compromise on South-West Africa would have been a significant concession, endangering Smuts's political position in the Union as well as his personal beliefs.

Wilson had already set himself up as an opponent of annexation, and Smuts correctly identified him as the leader who would have to be convinced of the necessity. On the other hand, Smuts had already gained several allies, amongst them Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, who had told Wilson on December 28th, 1918, that he thought 'German Southwest (sic) Africa could not be separated from the South African Union'<sup>27</sup>, as well as the delegations from New Zealand and Australia, who wanted to annex German Pacific territories they had captured during the war.

Wilson was intent on prohibiting annexation in the former German colonies all over the world. On 7 January, in Paris, Wilson proposed what later became known as the first Paris draft of the Versailles Settlement which included many of Smuts's ideas but on the issue of mandates added that they should be administered:

*In respect of the peoples and territories which formerly belonged to Austria-Hungary, and to Turkey, and in respect of the colonies formerly under the dominion of the German Empire.* <sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> SP v101/73 is one of the key indicators of this stance, in which Smuts argues 'we must...avoid all appearance of dismembering [Germany] or subjecting her to indefinite economic servitude and pauperism'. Hancock (*Smuts*, p. 512) writes 'appeasement was the new word which Smuts put into circulation'

<sup>27</sup> Lloyd George, *Memoirs*, I, 114-115.

<sup>28</sup> Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, III, 97-98, quoted in George Curry p977.

Smuts seems to have been slow to publicly gear up in opposition to Wilson's inclusion of the former German colonies. He went through a series of discussions with Wilson on the issue of mandates but failed to change his mind on the issue of annexation. He wrote to M.C. Gillett, a long-time friend that Wilson, 'is entirely opposed to our annexing a little German colony here or there, which pains me deeply...'<sup>29</sup>

Part of the reason Smuts seemed so slow to act on the issue of South-West Africa was that he was frantically involved in the reparations debate - Smuts spent much of January opposing Poincare of France, who opened the Conference by calling for 'justice' against the Germans, and the others who wanted harsh terms for Germany.<sup>30</sup> Smuts argued that if Germany were destroyed Europe would also be destroyed, and warned of the constant menace of Bolshevism.

For these reasons (and others stated above), many contemporary politicians such as Lloyd George believed Smuts was being hypocritical in suggesting easy terms for Germany - and no annexation of German continental territory - but calling for the annexation of Germany's overseas colonies. For example, Lloyd George (admittedly on June 3) asked Smuts if he was willing to trade German South-West Africa and the other colonies back to Germany, since he was so anxious to 'induce the [European] allies to accept smaller reparations.'<sup>31</sup>

Smuts, however, was very wily in his riposte and to some extent used the 'security' issue to forward his argument. He reiterated often his argument from the January 2nd, 1918 Speech in which he had stated that if the Germans were given the chance to create a Mittelfrika it would cut

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<sup>29</sup> SP v22/197, written on January 20th.

<sup>30</sup> Hancock, Smuts, v1/506-510.

<sup>31</sup> SP, v101/99.

the sea lanes which kept the Empire together - an argument which must have had some effect on the British.

Smuts's deeper reasons for opposing the return of Germany's colonies were reserved for his colleagues such as Lloyd George, to whom he wrote in his reply to the letter of 3 June:

.believe me, the repercussions of the Peace Treaty in South Africa is going to be tremendous. Events may soon prove that it has made the position of men like General Botha and myself very difficult, if not impossible.<sup>32</sup>

The importance of this letter is that it is another piece of evidence which shows that the impetus behind Smuts's arguments was not just security, but more importantly the political mood in South Africa which, like Smuts himself, was very pro-expansion. South Africans believed that since South-West Africa had been conquered by them it now belonged to them. Farmers and miners who had fought believing the territory would become theirs for settlement and investement could understand the return of Germany's colonies even less than statesmen such as Smuts and Botha.

Throughout January, although Smuts was very busy with a number of issues, South-West Africa was never completely shoved into the background and by 24 January was once again the main issue on his agenda. This date marked the meeting of the Council of Ten, held within the auspices of the Paris Peace Conference. Smuts had not been lax during this time, and he had with him not only a prepared speech on why the Union should be granted annexation rights but also a group of allies from the Union's fellow dominions - New Zealand and Australia.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> SP, v101/100. It is important to note that this letter was written months after the annexation of GSWA had been rejected.

<sup>33</sup> This is not to claim that Smuts had brought the group together. Hughes of Australia and Massey of New Zealand had their own interests to defend.

The Australians laid claim to Papua and the Marshall Islands and the New Zealanders to Samoa. Both dominions justified their claims based on the same basic reasoning as the Union - they had conquered these territories during the war.

According to Wilson, Hughes of Australia and New Zealand's Massey made claims 'based on strategic importance'<sup>34</sup> Premier Massey pointed out that Samoa lay on New Zealand's route to the Panama Canal<sup>31</sup>, and Premier Hughes said that if the Germans regained the islands 'there would be no peace for Australia, for any strong power controlling New Guinea controlled Australia'<sup>35</sup>. Smuts on the other hand, had other contentions which he calculated would be effective for his audience.

Much of his speech was taken up with the arguments of security and German maladministration which were the mainstays of the Union's argument. However, he elaborated on his 'Monroe doctrine for the South' by making several expansionist arguments. First he argued that South-West Africa should have been annexed to South Africa in 1884 but that Bismarck had snatched it up.<sup>36</sup> He also suggested that the country was even then being improved by the settling of Boer ranchers.<sup>37</sup>

Smuts also justified his expansionism by pointing out the France was claiming Alsace-Lorraine and wanted to directly annex it. Why then should South Africa not be able to annex South-West Africa, he argued. One day later, on 25 January, Smuts once again wrote to his old friend

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<sup>34</sup> Lansing Papers, *Desk Diary*, January 24, 1919. These are the unpublished diaries of the Secretary of State of the USA, Robert Lansing, quoted in Curry, 'Wilson and Smuts at Versailles'.

<sup>31</sup> *Foreign Relations, US, Paris Peace Conference (1919)* Vol III, p. 725, quoted in Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p. 42.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid* p. 751, quoted in Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p. 41.

<sup>37</sup> Bradford, The Origins and Concessions of the League of Nations Mandate, p. 89.

M.C. Gillett in London, and told him that his argument 'was principally that it was a desert, a part of the Kalahari no good to anybody, least of all so magnificent a body as the League of Nations!'<sup>38</sup>

Why should Smuts single out that argument as his principle one? In arguing that South-West Africa was of no use to anyone, he was really saying that it could only be improved by one group of people - the farmers and ranchers who made up much of the population of the Union and for whom the idea of huge open areas of land was a cultural imperative. Indeed, no great power had much use at that time for Namibia (except perhaps Germany, who was starved for colonies!), but Smuts knew that South Africa had both a cultural and political necessity to own that piece of 'desert'. This argument, which Smuts himself saw as the most important he had made, was not rooted in security or the welfare of the indigenous population, but rather it very subtly espoused the expansion of the South African state.

South-West Africa was not granted to the Union on the 24th. The Council of Ten got as far as to agree to the general principle of non-restoration of the German colonies, but no further.<sup>39</sup> The British delegation submitted a Draft Convention Regarding Mandates<sup>40</sup> which proposed guidelines on the powers and limitations of both mandatory and mandated territory, but which, as Robert Bradford wrote, 'avoided the most difficult question of all - to which colonies would its principles apply'. However, over the next six days this question was to become the center of discussion.

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<sup>38</sup> SP v22/200.

<sup>39</sup> Cockram, *South-West African Mandate* p. 41.

<sup>40</sup> British delegation, *Draft Convention Regarding Mandates*, January 24, 1919, quoted in Bradford, 'Origins and Concessions of the League of Nations Class 'C' Mandate for South-West Africa', p. 90.

On 27 January, debate began in earnest with Wilson's speech on the mandates. Wilson started off by saying that there was a feeling in the world that had sprung up against further annexations.<sup>41</sup> If the colonies were not to be returned to Germany, and he conceded that all were agreed they were not, then someone else must administer them - and he proposed administration through mandatories acting on *behalf of the League of Nations*. Then he went further and used South-West Africa as the example.

The case of South-West Africa would be found a most favourable instance to make a clear picture. South-West Africa has very few inhabitants, and those have been so maltreated, and their numbers have been so reduced under German administration, that the whole area is open to a development that can not yet be determined.

It is significant that Wilson used South-West Africa as his example. Wilson was very familiar with Smuts's goals and made it clear through this example that he disapproved of annexation. Wilson accepted Smuts's arguments that the territory was a desert but then rejected South African sovereignty, for the purpose of the post-war settlement, he argued, was to serve the people of South-West Africa and guard them from abuses and further, to 'assure their development' so that at some time they may be developed enough to decide their own role. As a sop, Wilson stated that that role might be union with the mandatory power. He then went on to lay the ground rules for the mandate.

Smuts now turned to his allies, and on January 28th, the dominions and the British delegation met together. The result of this meeting was a draft of what would eventually become Article XXII of the

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<sup>41</sup> SP XXXVII/WCP40

League Covenant.<sup>42</sup> The resolution, drafted by Smuts and Philip Kerr of Great Britain, was in fact partly a reply to Wilson's speech in two ways, both of which distinctly show the stamp of Jan Smuts.

First, the resolution never mentions the sovereignty of the League of Nations. Instead, the proposal used the words 'the Allied and Associated Powers' throughout. This was significant because it replied to Wilson's idea of 'administration through mandatories acting on behalf of the *League of Nations*',<sup>43</sup> and Smuts was to use the technicality of the difference between the League and the Allied and Associated Powers, which based upon his proposal appeared in the official 'C' Class Mandates such as that for South-West Africa, to his benefit several times. It is too simplistic to put this down only to cunning, since all documents at that time used 'Allied and Associated Powers', but the emphasis laid on that institution as the power behind the mandatory system is striking.

The second important reply to Wilson's attack on annexation proposed by Smuts and Kerr was to propose that, if there were to be mandates:

The Allied and Associated Powers are of the opinion that the character of the mandates must differ according to the stage of development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstances.

In other words, Smuts and Kerr proposed that different areas have different types of mandates, thus allowing the more 'primitive areas' to come under virtual annexation, with just a few safeguards - protection from slave trade, arms traffic, liquor traffic, the prevention of native

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<sup>42</sup> British Delegation, *Draft Resolution in Reference to Mandatories*, January 28, 1919. Text can also be found in Lloyd George, *Memoirs*, I, 357-358.

<sup>43</sup> SP XXXVII/WCP40

military training and military fortifications - none of which were really concessions which Smuts minded.<sup>44</sup>

There followed a short period in which Smuts, Botha, and Lloyd George talked the opposing teams - on the one side Wilson and on the other Massey and Hughes - into accepting the compromise proposal.<sup>45</sup>

On 30 January , the compromise was accepted by the interested parties. On 14 February the provisional draft of Article 22 of the convention was accepted.<sup>46</sup>

To whom does the victory go - Smuts or Wilson? Some historians, such as Gail Cockram, argue that Wilson won. She points out that 'Wilson's views prevailed. The mandates system was also to extend to the German colonies in the hands of the dominions.'<sup>47</sup> Certainly, Smuts did not get the license for annexation he wanted to come home with.

However, those historians who make this argument are basically stop their argument at the question of full annexation, which was rejected in January. Instead, it is important to realize that the argument was not over - and that Smuts, once he had lost annexation, was fighting for 'annexation in all but name'.<sup>48</sup>

On 26 February , Botha wrote a letter to Smuts, enjoining him to continue the paper battle for South-West Africa, even though annexation was out of the question. 'We must keep [South West-Africa]', he wrote, 'for we and the Germans will not again live together on a friendly footing if they keep German West'.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>45</sup> Bradford, 'Origins and Concessions of the League of Nations Class 'C' Mandate for South-West Africa' p. 107-109. The discussions are peripheral to this paper.

<sup>46</sup> The final draft to be accepted on April 28, 1919.

<sup>47</sup> Cockram, South West African Mandate, p. 42.

<sup>48</sup> SP v21/5, 20th of March.

<sup>49</sup> SP v19/28, 26th of February.

Smuts's task had now changed. He was no longer arguing for annexation, but for the best possible mandate - one which granted South Africa the ability to expand northward. The issue had become one of who would have sovereignty over the mandate. Wilson believed it should be the League of Nations. Smuts disagreed. In a letter to L.S. Amery, in the Colonial Office in London, he wrote 'in cases B and C,<sup>50</sup> the German territory should be vested in the mandatory state [not the League of Nations].'<sup>51</sup>

A minor victory, and an expected one, was won on the 7th of May when the Council of Four - Britain's Lloyd George, France's Clemenceau, Wilson, and Orlando of Italy - granted the mandates. The agreement stated 'It is agreed that in the case of German South-West Africa the mandate shall be held by the Union of South Africa'. This was important to Smuts because it was the Principle Allied Powers who were granting the mandate through the four principal powers, as he had hoped.<sup>52</sup>

Smuts now got together with Milner, who was acting as a British delegate, and proposed the guidelines for Class 'C' mandates - of which he hoped South-West Africa would be one. When the peace treaty was passed on 28 June, 1919, this proposal was in the works. Essentially taken from the Smuts-Kerr Proposal, its most important clause was one which said:

[The Mandatory Power] shall have full rights of administration and legislation over [the Mandated territory] as an integral portion of [The Mandatory Power] and may apply the laws of [The Mandatory Power] to [The Mandated territory] subject to such local modifications as circumstances may require.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> The three types of mandates had been proposed and settled upon by this point.

<sup>51</sup> SP v22/147, 21st of March.

<sup>52</sup> SP XXXVII/WCP40

<sup>53</sup> SP LIV/WCP1074, 28th of June.

Several points in this proposal were very important to Smuts. The first was the 'full rights of administration and legislation' point, which would give the Union the right to extend its policies - including settlement - into South-West Africa. Even more important is that the Union could govern its protectorate as 'an integral portion'. This is 'annexation in all but name'. If this proposal were accepted, South African native policy, fiscal policy, administration, and everything else could be imposed upon South-West Africa - essentially making it a fifth province.

How successful was Smuts in getting this clause applied to South-West Africa? When the Mandate for South-West Africa was passed (not until 17, December, 1920) it included the following clauses:

The Mandatory shall have full power of administration and legislation over the territory subject to the present Mandate as an integral portion of the Union of South Africa, and may apply the laws of the Union of South Africa to the territory subject to such local modifications as circumstances may require.

The Mandatory shall promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and the social progress of the inhabitants of the territory subject to the present Mandate<sup>54</sup>

The proposal and the final form of the mandate are almost exactly alike, except for the added second paragraph, which at the time did not concern Smuts much, and the fact that the League of Nations was going to pass the Mandate act, not the Principle Allied and Associated Powers.

But in July/August 1919, the passing of the actual mandate was in the future, and Smuts returned to South Africa on 4 August. On the 28th, Jan Smuts longtime political partner and friend, Louis Botha, died of a

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<sup>54</sup> League of Nations, 'The Mandate for South West Africa', Article 2, December 17th, 1920.

heart attack, and Smuts was no longer South Africa's diplomat, but its Prime Minister.

### THE SOVEREIGNTY ISSUE

The conferring of the South-West African Mandate on South Africa did not settle the question of who really owned the land. Many South Africans agreed with Senator R.A. Kerr who declared, in 1922, that 'we fought and won German South-West Africa in a fair way in battle and... as a result of that war and that fight, we are the owners of South-West Africa'.<sup>55</sup> Many world leaders, however, pointed out that 'ownership' of South-West Africa was 'a sacred trust'<sup>56</sup> held for the League of Nations and the natives of the territory.

As we have seen, Smuts was a proponent of the former theory - one which argued that the Mandate was a step on the way to annexation. However, believing it is so does not make it so, and Smuts had yet to convince the international community that South Africa was the sovereign power.

The South African government had the dual task of convincing the League of Nations and the British government that they held sovereignty over South-West Africa, and after Smuts and his party won the 1920 election, they set out to do so.

Perhaps the greatest indication of Smuts's beliefs is the speech he gave to the Germans in Windhoek during his tour in September, 1920 (a speech which will be discussed several times in this paper).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Senate Debates, 3rd March, 1930, column 280, cited in Peinaar, p. 119.

<sup>56</sup> Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, June 28, 1919.

<sup>57</sup> ADM 427(18)'Speech Delivered by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister of the Union of

Smuts repeatedly told his audience, mainly Germans, that the League of Nations was not the sovereign power over South-West Africa.<sup>52</sup> 'The League of Nations has nothing to do with the giving of the Mandate,' he told the crowd. 'Under the Peace Treaty Germany renounces her Colonies not to the League of Nations but to the Great Powers.' This argument is, in fact, not quite correct, since the Mandate stated that the Union 'has undertaken to exercise [the Mandate] on behalf of the League of Nations'.<sup>58</sup>

Smuts further argued that the League of Nations 'is concerned with the Mandate in one way.....natives', and that the Union 'has complete authority over this territory, to deal with it as an integral portion of the Union.'

In the next section of his speech, the Prime Minister expressed his own (hopeful) expansionist ideals by stating that the Union 'can declare South-West Africa a province of the Union, and it can give to the inhabitants of South-West Africa representation in the Union Parliament'. This was a very controversial statement, because this was not internationally believed to be the case.

In concluding his arguments on sovereignty, Smuts said 'The country with its population is entrusted to the Union, and the Union, therefore, is the only country which can speak for them and act for them both here and internationally.'

Much of Smuts's speech was based on his understanding of the terms of the Mandate which was only granted three months after his

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South Africa at Windhuk(sic)', September 16, 1920.

<sup>52</sup> Indeed, he repeated this point three times, which is in itself quite indicative of the strength of his feelings.

<sup>58</sup> League of Nations, 'Mandate for South West Africa', preamble, December 17, 1920. The mandate was not yet officially conferred, but Smuts was aware of its contents.

South-West African trip. The Mandate document, however, tells us something different. It declares that the arguments shall be submitted to the Permanent Court of International Justice (i.e. the League of Nations).<sup>59</sup>

Smuts may be accused of believing the idiom that saying something often enough will make it fact. However, he was hoping to back his assertions up with legal and political fact.

The first part of his crusade had started in 1919. At that point, the mandate was not yet passed, and South-West Africa was under South African martial law. Therefore the Union Parliament passed Act 49 of 1919 in July 1919 which gave the Governor-General authority over South-West Africa - an authority which he already held from the British government.<sup>60</sup>

The Governor-General was a British appointee, but Smuts wished South-West Africa to come under sole control of the Union. The issue came to a head in 1919, when the Nationalists in parliament charged that the Union was neither competent to sign the Peace Treaty nor to legislate for South-West Africa, since that was the King's role. Smuts argued that the Union had been delegated control over South-West Africa and that right now belonged to the Union - not to the Empire. In a telegram to the British Secretary of State, he relayed:

I explained that King through royal prerogative was competent to extend legislative jurisdiction of Union, and that in this case King had tacitly done so as one of the Great Powers who conferred the Mandate over South West Africa on Union<sup>61</sup>

Smuts then told the Secretary of State that 'Mandate over Samoa is given to New Zealand not to United Kingdom... the King in his British

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, Article 7.

<sup>60</sup> Act 49 of 1919, Union Parliament, in the Union Gazette Extraordinary, 20 September, 1919.

<sup>61</sup> GG 4/195, November 15th, 1919.

Government or Privy Council is beside the point'. He went on to explain that only East Africa, for which Britain had itself been given the Mandate, was answerable to the King as the head of state of Britain.

The interesting part of this declaration is not that Smuts faced down challenges to Union sovereignty from within (though that is of some interest), but that he declared, in a roundabout manner by using New Zealand as his example, that the South-West Africa Mandate was held not by Britain (the Empire), but by the Union (the dominion).

There is a lot of speculation on why the British did not challenge Smuts. Cooper suggests that there were two reasons:

One is that Britain was exhausted from world wars, colonial disputes, and pressures for decolonization... Another is that.. South Africa... always maintained an 'open door' economic policy in the territory... the largest mineral prizes in Namibia were given to American and British companies.<sup>62</sup>

This theory centers on the motivations of Britain, but ignores the equally valid importance of South African motives. Smuts actively pursued recognition of Union sovereignty, and proceeded to justify it by using the legal system of the Union.

His chance to judicially establish the Union's primacy came after the Bondelswartz Rebellion of 1922 (discussed in Chapter 7). The question of sovereignty was tested by the government's case that the Bondels, and their leader Jacobus Christian, had committed treason against the government by fighting the Administrator's forces (representing the government) who had been sent to fight them. The Supreme Court in Windhoek returned a verdict of guilty<sup>63</sup>, and the Appellate Division in

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<sup>62</sup> Cooper, The Occupation of Namibia, p. 116.

<sup>63</sup> Pienaar, Sara, South Africa and International Relations Between the Two World Wars: The League of Nations Dimension, 1987, p. 119.

Bloemfontein ruled that treason can only be committed against a person or persons possessing sovereignty.

Thus the case rested on the question of whether or not the Union had sovereignty over South-West Africa. The court ruled affirmatively:

the crime of high treason...can be committed against a state which possesses internal sovereignty, even though its external powers may be limited in certain respects.

The Government of the Union... as mandatory of South-West Africa under the treaty of Versailles, possesses sufficient internal sovereignty to warrant a charge of high treason against an inhabitant of the mandated territory who takes up arms with hostile intent against the Government of that territory.<sup>64</sup>

This decision must have pleased Smuts, as it strengthened his argument based at least on South African law. Not only did the court support South African sovereignty, but it also denied the sovereignty of the League of Nations by stating that

The League is not a State, nor do the principal Powers constitute one. That Government [Union] has, by virtue of treaty obligations, consented to certain limitations of its powers. But those limitations are not inconsistent with the possession of majestas within its own territory; and such majestas which formerly resided in the German Government must now reside in the new authority. There is no other State or Power in which it can be vested.<sup>65</sup>

There were several fundamental flaws in Smuts's argument. The most important was that, despite the argument of the Union's courts that the League was not a sovereign power, the fact was that neither was the Union. The Union was a British dominion, and the Mandate clearly stated that the territory was the responsibility of His Britannic Majesty, not of the Union.

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<sup>64</sup> 1924 South African Law Reports (Appellate Division), p. 101.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid p. 102.

The South Africa Act of 1909, which created the Union, gave the Union the ability to divide and combine province, but not add new territories to the nation - that was the prerogative of the British King.<sup>66</sup>

The other 'C' class Mandatories which were British Dominions accepted the fact that they did not have sovereignty. South Africa, however, did not. The Australians granted limited self-government to the Naruans in 1921. New Zealand eventually accepted British sovereignty.<sup>67</sup> South Africa, under Smuts, actively pursued sovereignty and while the British continued to advise New Zealand and Australia in Naruan, New Guinean, and Samoan administration, they declined involvement in South-West African affairs, where Smuts was intent on his dream of Union hegemony over southern Africa.

The British government, which had every right to involve itself in the running of the territory, abstained for two reasons. First, as Cooper stated, it was not interested in administering new territories. More importantly, however, Smuts's vehemence and opposition to their involvement, expressed through speeches and in the courts, convinced them to abstain from fighting for primacy in the protectorate.

The case of *Rex vs. Christian* was not enough to settle the matter with the League of Nations, however. The Permanent Mandates Commission, to which South Africa as a mandatory power was pledged to report, was frustrated by the attitude of Smuts's government both in the Bondelswartz case and on other issues throughout Smuts's first term as Prime Minister - and beyond.

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<sup>66</sup> Cooper, *The Occupation of Namibia*, p. 125.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 132.

### THE RESULTS BY 1924

Historians such as George Curry and Gail-Maryse Cockram debate whether Smuts or Wilson was the victor at the Paris Peace Conference. It is important, in order to answer this question, to understand what Smuts's goals were. The many Historians who look at the creation of the South-West Africa Mandate often portray 'security' or 'native welfare' as Smuts's main arguments. I have argued that Smuts's main interest was instead the expansion of South Africa.

In fact, he did use the arguments on the welfare of the indigenous people and the security of the Empire, as well as others, because they were effective for his audience. Still, we can see that Smuts's main concern was expansion. If he were not interested in South Africa's expansion, then why was he unwilling to accept a mandate which could secure both 'native welfare' and 'security' for South Africa and the Empire? Additionally, why was he so concerned with the question of sovereignty?

If we accept that Smuts's ideal condition was annexation, then we can evaluate his success at the Paris Peace Conference. It is more revealing, however, to evaluate his success by 1924, when his first term of office ended - in terms of sovereignty.

Although the Permanent Mandates Commission was upset by certain actions of the South African government - its treatment of the Bondelswartz rebellion, the agreement establishing the border with Angola which recited that South Africa 'possesses sovereignty' over South-West Africa,<sup>68</sup> the 1922 Railway and Harbours Act discussed in the next chapter, etc. - they generally had little power to change the situation.

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<sup>68</sup> Goldblatt, I, The Mandated Territory of South West Africa in relation to the United Nations, p.

Smuts's government was able to generally ignore the blandishments of the League of Nations - even in extreme cases such as the Bondelswartz affair. Smuts, in fact, was confident enough to remind the Permanent Mandates Commission that:

the Union has full power of legislation and administration over South-West Africa as an integral portion of the Union, and, that the effect is very much the same as if they were incorporated into the Union.<sup>70</sup>

By January, 1923, the League of Nations was forced by the various mandatory powers to agree that petitions against an administration could only be submitted to the PMC through the mandatory power. Even before then, the Smuts government had been negligent in its duties to the League of Nations, but afterwards, they were to act as if annexation had really taken place.

The British, who also had a *de jure* claim to sovereignty, were in fact distanced from the administration of the region, by both their disinterest and the Union's opposition to their involvement.

The fact remains that while the League of Nations could at least argue that it was itself the sovereign power, Jan Smuts's expansionist ideology had assisted him in enforcing his will internationally and successfully gaining for the Union administrative control of South-West Africa, access for its settlers, and the extension of South African laws - in other words, 'annexation in all but name'.

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<sup>70</sup> League of Nations, Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes, II, 1922, Annex 6, 'Letter from General Smuts to WE Rappard, July 4, 1922'.

## CHAPTER 6: THEMES OF THE MANDATE 1919-1924

In 1919, Smuts began his first tenure as Prime Minister of the Union, a position he held until 1924, when Bary Hertzog replaced him. During these years, Smuts was heavily involved with the South-West African territory, both before and after the Mandate was officially granted in December 1920. In some areas his involvement was integral to events, such as the integration of the German people and the promotion of Union settlers. Sometimes he set policy, which was then carried out by others, as generally happened in affairs which dealt with the indigenous population.

This chapter will outline the main themes of the period 1919-1924. Subsequent chapters will discuss Smuts's roles in dealing with them.

### LEGISLATION AND BUREAUCRACY

Before the official granting of the Mandate in 1920, South-West Africa was a 'protectorate' of the Union of South Africa. For part of this time (1915-1919), it was run by a military governor under martial law. Towards the end, a Secretary and then Administrator was appointed to govern the Protectorate with advice from a council of citizens. The Administrator was responsible to the Union government for his decisions. From 1919 onwards this administrator was Guys Hofmeyr.

After the occupation of the territory, the Union began to apply its laws to the Protectorate even though it had no legal sovereignty over the region; for example, the Customs and Tariffs Acts which were applied by Beves in 1916.

The incorporation of South-West African Administration into the Union Government, allowed for in Article 2 of the Mandate leapt forward in 1920. This was a transitional year. In September 1919 the Union Parliament accepted the Mandate<sup>1</sup> even though it was not actually offered by the League of Nations until 1 December, 1920.

Many of the ensuing proclamations simply extended Union law to the territory as if it were a fifth province. Act 5 of 1920 extended stock theft laws to South-West Africa, Act 6 dealt with intoxicating liquors for non-whites. Other acts implemented Union laws on deeds, land settlement, mining, and even holidays. Some laws were extended from the Cape Province, such as the Masters, Servants, and Apprentices Laws which became Proclamation No. 34. Others came from the Transvaal, such as Proclamation No. 35, which was a copy of the Transvaal Company Law. South African judicial practices were extended to the territory by Proclamations Nos. 51 and 52, but were slightly amended to allow for German law practices in some respects.<sup>2</sup>

In 1920, Hofmeyr issued Proclamations Nos. 69 and 70, which 'provide[d] for the acquisition of the railways built during the war period and the continued management of the railways as an integral portion of the Union Railways.'<sup>3</sup> The word choice is interesting, because it echoes the Mandate Document (which was official by this time) which stated in Section two that the Union would have full power over the Mandate 'as an integral portion of the Union of South Africa.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UG Act 49 of 1919, "For Carrying into effect any Mandate issued in pursuance of the Treaty to the Union of South Africa with reference to the territory of South West Africa..." 20th September, 1919.

<sup>2</sup> UG 26-21, Report of the Administrator of South West Africa for the Year 1920, 10th March, 1921.

<sup>3</sup> SAS 12/45 Memorandum on Railways: Parliamentary Section, of 5 January, 1921.

<sup>4</sup> League of Nations, 'Mandate for South-West Africa', 7 December, 1920.

In 1922, during a slight drought and depression in South-West Africa, the Union government passed Act 20 of 1922, which officially transferred the railways from South-West African finances to the Union Government - which became the direct owners.

Legislation in South-West Africa can be divided into three types. The first two types, shown above, either extended Union laws into the territory or combined Union and South-West African institutions. The third class of legislation was meant to solve specifically South-West African problems, such as the legislation on Walvis Bay.

### THE QUESTION OF WALVIS BAY

Walvis Bay ( or Walfish Bay) is a port town on the coast of South-West Africa below Swakopmund. Walvis Bay had, before the First World War, been a British enclave<sup>5</sup> , and it was occupied in 1914 by the German Imperial forces in South-West Africa.

Although Walvis Bay had been administratively annexed to the Cape Colony in 1884, after 1910 it did not become part of the Union. Instead, Walvis Bay was officially British territory, but the Union government was its *de facto* administrator between 1910-1915.<sup>6</sup> After the granting of the South-West Africa Mandate, the Union felt it should become part of the mandated territory.

The Union Government decided to set up a test case in their own courts to see if they could legally impose their laws upon Walvis Bay. The

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<sup>5</sup> Since March 12, 1878. Berat, L., Walvis Bay, Yale University Press, 1990, p.37.

<sup>6</sup> Berat. Walvis Bay, pp.45, 50.

case was *Rex vs. Mahoney*, a situation in which the defendant was accused of providing a Coloured man with three bottles of brandy, an act technically illegal in South-West Africa and one which, interestingly enough, contravened the terms of the Mandate given by the League of Nations. The accused was tried on Act No. 28 of 1883 - an act passed in the Cape Province and extended to the Mandate in 1916, but not necessarily enforceable in Walvis Bay.

The Union judges, however, concluded that the act, which was not illegal according to British law, could not be tried in South African Court. Justice Fagan, concluded:

- 1) That there has been no valid promulgation of the Protectorate proclamations in Walfish Bay.
- 2.) That this particular proclamation forms part of the fiscal and administrative law of the Protectorate, which cannot be applied to Walfish Bay.<sup>7</sup>

South African Act No. 35 of 1921<sup>8</sup>, passed in the wake of this case, stated that the Mandate would be regarded as part of the Union for purposes of collecting excises and customs (in itself significant), and that for these purposes Walvis Bay would be regarded as part of South Africa, however the British government had not yet agreed to this. Smuts then appealed to Governor-General Buxton, who turned to the Colonial Office for instructions. By Proclamation 145 of 1922, he turned administrative power for Walvis Bay over to the Union as of 1 October, 1922.<sup>9</sup> However, it was the SWA Administration, and not the Union Government, which was given authority over the port - legislative as well as judicial. This

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<sup>7</sup> Cape Times, "Protectorate Proclamations: Position of Walfish Bay", May 28, 1921.

<sup>8</sup> UG 44-22, Report of the Administrator of South West Africa for the Year 1921, 30 June, 1922.

<sup>9</sup> GG Proc. 145 of 1922, 15 September, 1922.

kept the Union from claiming direct sovereignty over Walvis Bay, and Smuts was not entirely satisfied.

While this was not full annexation, it was the furthest the Union government got during Smuts's first administration.

### THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

During the South-West African campaign, much of the black population was pro-Union. Botha wrote to Smuts on 3 April, 1915, 'Native population very bitter against Germans and will be impossible for latter carry on guerrilla war...'. However, he added, 'Am using all my influence [to] prevent natives [from] taking part against enemy in this war.'<sup>10</sup>

The Germans were quite unpopular among the indigenous groups, and under their dominion the territory had experienced uprisings and wars between the Germans and every one of the major black and Coloured groups - the campaign against the Herero being particularly bloody. For this reason, many non-whites were willing to help the invaders. The South African force did use non-whites as scouts - such as Abraham Morris, future leader of the Bondelswartz<sup>11</sup> - however they did not support native uprisings against the Germans nor allow them to join the fight.

Many of the non-whites welcomed Union rule. Botha's victory and Buxton's visit to the protectorate prompted the Coloured population to present the Governor-General with a letter which stated:

We... wish to convey our congratulations through your Lordship to his Majesty the King and Allies for the victory over the enemy.

<sup>10</sup> SP CXII (18) telegram Botha to Smuts, 3 April, 1915.

<sup>11</sup> Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p. 139.

Now that the war is over and this protectorate being under the British Administration... we beg your Lordship to receive our congratulations...<sup>12</sup>

The Coloured population believed the new rule would be more benevolent than the last and used the letter to ask for new privileges, including exemption from the Native Laws and improved hospitals, railways, and schools. They also expected the new administration to protect their rights.

The Union made much of the support they enjoyed from the non-whites, especially the coloureds, in their campaign to gain annexation in the League of Nations. They published the Report on the Suffering of Natives Under German Rule, discussed in Chapter 5, and made it available to the delegates at the Paris Peace Conference in 1918. Among other assertions, the document declared 'they... compelled women and even children of eight years of age and upwards to work,' as well as slaughtered and abused the men, and suggested that 'There is a further point which may be worth mentioning and that is the danger of the existence just beyond the Union border of a native population in a constant state of dissatisfaction and unrest...'.<sup>13</sup>

The alleged German maltreatment of blacks and coloureds gave the Union a lever to use in acquiring the territory. The articles of the Mandate set out several specific protections for the indigenous people: the prohibitions of the slave trade and forced labour, trafficking in arms, supplying alcohol, and raising armies indigenous soldiers.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> GG 50/800, 2 October 1919.

<sup>13</sup> SP 19/103, Report on Suffering of Natives under German Rule, and preamble, 21 January, 1918.

<sup>14</sup> League of Nations Mandate for South West Africa, 17 December, 1920.

Much of the Union's policy during the early years of the Mandate was, thus ironically, a continuation of German colonial policy. The Germans had established reserves, which were 'recognized and adopted' by the new administration.<sup>15</sup> These reserves fit in perfectly with the Union's own system of reserves. Indeed, one union official said '[the Africans] soon realised that conditions would remain practically the same... as they were in German times.'<sup>16</sup>

Some German policies could not be extended to the new Mandate, either because they did not fit in with Smuts's plans or because they contravened the League of Nations Mandate. The Germans, for example, were able to use forced labour. The Union was restricted by the Mandate from doing this, and instead hid its policy behind subtle technicalities - such as vagrant laws and hut and dog taxes, which had forced blacks in the Union to work in the mines and, it was hoped, would serve the same purpose in South-West Africa.

Aside from the labour laws, Smuts's government lived up to the word, if not the spirit, of the Mandate. In 1920, Proclamation 6 made it illegal to supply liquor to non-whites and Coloured persons,<sup>17</sup> and other proclamations and acts outlawed the provisioning of arms and ammunition to non-whites. Smuts, of course, had no plans to raise a native army.

Outside of these provisions, the Administration's policy towards blacks and coloureds was generally quite harsh. In 1921, 'native' families were scheduled to be confined to reserves. It is true the reserves were to

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<sup>15</sup> ADM 51/509, Warbad Magistrate to Secretary for Protectorate, 21 March, 1918.

<sup>16</sup> League of Nations PMC, Min, III, 19th Meeting, August 1, 1923, p. 129, quoted in Bradford, p. 90.

<sup>17</sup> UG 26-21, Report of the Administrator of SWA for the Year 1920, 10 March, 1921, p. 1.

occupy 2.5 million hectares of land, but as usual, the land was generally not suitable for farming.

The year 1922 was one of major policy implementation in the Mandate. In April, the administration extended Union acts dealing with native 'locations' in urban areas, structuring them to provide labour and restrict vagrancy, as well as to extract fees for occupation sites.

More significantly, the Native Administration Act was proclaimed.<sup>18</sup> This act extended pass laws to all non-whites in the territory:

No native may travel within or leave the territory without a permit... A native found beyond the confines of a location, reserve, farm or place of residence or employment shall exhibit on demand by police, duly authorized municipal official, landowner or lessee his pass and on neglect to produce it may be arrested.<sup>19</sup>

Although the regulation did not apply in Ovamboland or Okavango,<sup>20</sup> it did apply to coloureds such as the Rheheboth Basters and khoi tribes such as the Bondelswartz, who were indignant at it.

The purpose of the law was to tie non-Europeans to a certain area of land and compel them to take what work was available there. Along with the dog and hut taxes, it was expected that this would make labour more available to the farmers and ranchers. As Hofmeyr wrote in his 1920 report, 'The native question... is synonymous with the Labour question.'<sup>21</sup> In the end, however, this combination was to lead to rebellions by several groups, the most significant of which was the Bondelswartz Rebellion of 1922, which will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

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<sup>18</sup> ADM 11 of '22, Act 11 of 1922, Native Administration Act, Administration of South West Africa, October 1922.

<sup>19</sup> UG 21-23, Report of the Administrator of SWA for the Year 1922, 10 April, 1922, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> probably due to the impossibility of enforcing it in these areas.

<sup>21</sup> UG 36-21 Report of the Administrator for SWA for the Year 1920, April 1920, p. 14.

The German population complained about instances of unrest, comparing the Administration's handling of them to that of the former government. 'doubts arise within one as to who the real master of the situation is at present, the Administration or the Native,'<sup>22</sup> questioned one German-language newspaper. Pressure was thus kept up by the white population on Smuts and Hofmeyr to implement harsh policies dealing with non-whites.

### THE BONDELSWARTZ 'AFFAIR' OF 1922

The Bondelswartz Rebellion has been well researched by historians studying the League of Nations and the South-West Africa Mandate. Gail-Maryse Cockram devoted a whole chapter of her book South-West Africa Mandate to the uprising, and Gottshalk and Swanson both refer to it in detail. One of the most comprehensive discussions on the rebellion, however, was a 1977 masters thesis at Rhodes University written by Gavin Llewellyn Lewis.<sup>23</sup>

The rebellion was the largest single uprising by a non-white group between 1914 and 1924. At issue were economic, social, political, and territorial questions. It was not only a protest against existing conditions, but tested the sovereignty of the Union in both military and legal circuits. Its eventual resolution led to conflict both inside the territory, within the Union, and between the Union and the League of Nations.

The Bondelswartz were a mainly pastoralist tribe of Nama, or khoi, extraction. Their 1903 revolt is sometimes seen as the signal for the

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<sup>22</sup> "Anarchical Native Conditions", *Landes-Zeitung*, 12 August, 1922.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, Gavin, 'The Bondelswartz Rebellion of 1922', MA Thesis, Rhodes University, 1977.

This clause would have had all German civilian and military officials withdrawn, and all other Germans suspended from the territory for twelve months.<sup>35</sup>

While the Union was quite happy with the first point, they were not about to have the business of running South-West Africa, for which it was imperative to keep certain Germans in the protectorate, disrupted. Nor would Botha and Smuts have been happy to have exported whites, whom they saw as a valuable commodity. The clause was not included in the final draft of the mandate.

Still, the German question was a large one. In the long run, as Green had pointed out, citizenship was a major question. The shorter term issue, however, was repatriation. At wars end there were about 8,000 settlers who were allowed to stay when all the military and civil officers were forced to withdraw.<sup>36</sup> Their status was a major question for Botha and, from 1919 on, for Smuts.

The 1919 repatriations served to 'clear the district of the most undesirable class'.<sup>37</sup> The three main classes of repatriates were military and official, undesirables, and voluntary repatriations. The 1919 Report of the Administrator reveals that the forced repatriation of military, official, and police personnel totaled 2,300 men and approximately 900 dependents. In addition, 1,223 men, women, and children were excluded from the territory as undesirables.

The repatriation of German subjects served, inter alia, to remove possible disturbing elements in the preservation of law and order, especially in regard to the administration of native affairs.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid*, enclosure.

<sup>36</sup> Hancock, *Smuts*, p. 103.

<sup>37</sup> UG 40-21, Report of the Administrator of South West Africa for the Year 1919, 25 May 1920, p. 4..

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*

So reported the District Commissioner for Keetmanshoop. Thus were possible disturbing elements - German loyalists, the poor, and activists - purged from the territory. The exodus of 1,433 voluntary exiles meant further security, because these were mainly people who strongly supported German rule in the Mandated territory.

The German population did not, for obvious reasons, support the repatriation. The District Commissioner for Windhoek noted that 'it is only natural that they... condemn the repatriation' and yet 'the better class of German... expresses his unconditional approval of a policy which rid the country of the criminal class and of officials.'<sup>39</sup> It seems very possible that the repatriation of criminals and the lower class Germans was popular, but it is doubtful that the forced repatriation of officials received the same support from the German population.

When, in September 1920, Smuts began his tour of the South-West Africa Protectorate, he expected to receive both ideas and criticisms. However, he could not have expected the deluge of petitions which greeted him at every stop. There were 62 official petitions and addresses presented to him.<sup>40</sup> In Swakopmund alone he was presented with seven. They came from merchants and farmers interested in economic issues, lawyers concerned about judicial practices, missionaries hoping for loans, even individuals applying for ration payments and clamoring for the return of their loved ones.

Most important were the various petitions given to him by the municipalities of Swakopmund, Omaruru, Koraseb, Karibib, Keetmanshoop, and Windhoek. These solicitations had many of the same

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid*

<sup>40</sup> ADM 427/18.3, 'Petitions and Addresses Presented to The Prime Minister, on occasion of his visit to the South-West Protectorate', September, 1920.

themes; most of which were complaints by the German population having to do with Union governance.

Claiming that the peace program concluded by Wilson set down the basis of the Union's interactions with the Germans, and quoting Wilson<sup>41</sup>, the signatories of the petition from the municipality of Windhuk called for:

free, honest, absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon the strict observation of the principle that when all such sovereignty questions are decided the interests of the populations concerned shall enjoy the same consideration as the reasonable claims of any government whose claims shall be decided upon.<sup>42</sup>

Thus asserting their rights, the many municipalities declared as the main concerns the following: 'the continuation of German institutions, introduction of German capital, return of repatriated Germans, a new German consulate, the use of German as the official language, and the retention of the German Civil Code,<sup>43</sup> as well as German-medium education. In short, a return to German-style rule.

The issue which the German population was most concerned with was education, and the question around which debate centered was whether education would be German, Dutch-Afrikaans, or English medium.

In 1919, the administration of South-West Africa, emerging from martial law, decided upon a solution to the education problem - a solution which was just the beginning. Until this date, German schools had been separate and not government funded. There were 23 public 'British' schools - although Dutch<sup>44</sup> was the prevailing medium of 13 of these

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<sup>41</sup> Manifest of the President of 27th September, 1918.

<sup>42</sup> ADM 1899/3, 'Resolution of Windhuk Municipality', 16 September, 1920.

<sup>43</sup> The Times, September 20, 1920, quoted in Swanson p653.

<sup>44</sup> Presumably Afrikaans

schools.<sup>45</sup> The administrator, Gorges, in consultation with Botha and Smuts, proposed that German-medium schools be set up to provide public education for the German population. The terms were as follows:

In such German schools the medium for the first four years will be German, but a daily lesson will be given in a Union language to be chosen by the parents. In 1924, the Union language will be the medium of instruction in the Fifth standard, in 1925 in Standards V and VI... and in 1927 all standards. In all these upper standards German will be taught as a language for at least one lesson daily by qualified teachers.<sup>46</sup>

The Administration practically fell over from patting itself on the back for this compromise, pointing out how it contrasted to the 'rigorous and unsympathetic treatment of immigrants from the Union... under the late Government.' The Germans were not as satisfied, as we know from the 1920 petitions to Smuts. For one thing, English and Afrikaans medium private schools were government-subsidied, but German ones were not.

Gorges was replaced at the end of 1919 by Hofmeyr, who began to immediately negotiate with German officials as to the assimilation of their schooling. His more complex plan assimilated German speaking teachers into the Union's pay scale but required that from Standard VII the medium of education be wholly Dutch or English.<sup>47</sup> In no other way did it differ from the previous plans, and the negotiations continued.

By 1921, with the negotiations ongoing, the enrollment at English and Afrikaans medium public schools was 1,213, and at German-medium public schools it was 367. The negotiations were completed on 11th November, 1921, and the agreement did not diverge significantly from

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<sup>45</sup> UG 40-20, Report of the Administrator of South West Africa for the Year 1919, 25 May 1920, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> UG 26-21 Report of the Administrator for SWA for the Year 1920, 10 Marcy 1920, p. 14.

The report clearly pointed out that for the German population to vote and hold office, they must be citizens of the Mandatory power - in this case British citizens, as all other South Africans.

The Commission presented two plans for doing this. The first was to naturalize every German man who signed a form expressing the desire to become a British citizen. The other plan was to make every adult German male a citizen *unless* he signed a form expressing the desire to retain his German citizenship. The Commission made it clear that it supported the latter alternative.

The Commission declared that in its view, naturalization of the German population must occur. They declared:

it is clear to your commission that it is impossible to permit persons who do not owe allegiance to the Union to participate in shaping the political affairs of a territory which is to be administered by the Union as an integral part thereof.<sup>52</sup>

Between 1920 and 1922, the Administration of South-West Africa attempted to find a compromise which would allow naturalization to take place. In 1923, through Smuts's personal action, the League of Nations accepted the plan.<sup>53</sup>

In early 1923, the Union Government thus put a resolution regarding future government in the territory and guaranteeing representation for all the European population before the white population of South-West Africa. Attached to the end of the resolution was a point which would provide for naturalization.

The resolution passed in all the districts of South-West Africa except for Windhoek, where it was soundly defeated.<sup>54</sup> The American

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> PMC, quoted in Cockram, *South-West Africa Mandate*, p. 170.

<sup>54</sup> UG 21-24, Report of the Administrator of South West Africa for the year 1923, 31 March 1924,

Consul General in Cape Town wrote to the State Department '... it is apparent that there is considerable dissatisfaction among the... German population. Many of them continue to demonstrate their extreme unwillingness to change their allegiance to the [British] Empire.'<sup>55</sup> Still, after victory in the vote, Smuts could proceed if he could gain the support of the German government. He therefore organized the 1923 London Conference to gain this support.

The meeting took place on the 22nd and 23rd of October, 1923. The participants themselves made out that it was friendly, Smuts writing 'I wish to express to you [de Haas] and Dr. Ruppel my appreciation of the friendly spirit in which the matter has been dealt and disposed of,' and de Haas replying 'the friendly feelings which you express... are fully appreciated by Dr. Ruppel and myself.'<sup>56</sup>

The German side of the compromise was embodied in the introduction. Simply, it would 'advise its nationals to adopt in respect of the proposed law for the automatic grant of Union citizenship to the Germans domiciled in South-West Africa.'<sup>57</sup>

In return, Smuts conceded eleven points to the German population. Primarily, he was to agree that the Germans of South-West Africa receive the same privileges and responsibilities as all other citizens. Additionally, however, he was to grant them special privileges.

The German language, the document provided, could be used in public offices and official correspondence, and the government would reply in the same language whenever possible. German churches and

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p. 394.

<sup>55</sup> USC, Despatch No. 307 of US Consul to South Africa. August 9th, 1922.

<sup>56</sup> Letters published in "South-West African Germans", *The Times*, P. 1., 29 January, 1924.

<sup>57</sup> SWAA 1315/1, Memorandum on the London Agreement, 23 October, 1923.

missions would be treated sympathetically. Germans would be able to immigrate under the same provisions as for the union, and German co-operative societies could be formed.

In a move that was very important to the German population of South-West Africa, the Agreement stated that they could not be forced to take military service against Germany for thirty years (until 1953). This concession would rebound on Smuts in 1939 and cause problems throughout World War II.

In addition, Germans were guaranteed Representation on Land Boards and on the Advisory Board of the Land and Agricultural Bank - but only one member guaranteed on each.

Smuts also agreed to take on the pensions of former civil servants of the German government, but only on several conditions: that they stay resident in South-West Africa and that they accept Union citizenship. Similarly, the Workmen's Compensation Act of the Union would be extended to South-West African Germans.

In addition, the Union undertook to provide for the development of Swakopmund - a mostly German town - as an educational center and the principal 'watering place' in South-West Africa.

Included in the concessions was the understanding that the Administration would provide 50 percent support for two German schools in Swakopmund and Windhoek.<sup>58</sup>

The London agreement of 1923 facilitated the naturalization of the German population into the Union, and was the major watermark of this period as regards the Germans.

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<sup>58</sup> all *ibid.*

### IMMIGRATION OF UNION SETTLERS

In 1914 there were 1800 South African citizens in German South-West Africa.<sup>59</sup> These - mostly Afrikaans - settlers were almost all ranchers, boers who ranched huge herds of cattle and sometimes smaller stock. They lived in extended families, many of them in the southern area of the Protectorate around Keetmanshoop, isolated from the cities of the Union, with the closest farm kilometers away and workers - white, African, Coloured, and bushmen - working side by side with them.

Their lifestyle and worldview would have been very familiar to much of the Union's population, especially the Afrikaners of the northern Cape, Transvaal, and Free State who had trekked farther and farther away from the Cape in order to escape first Dutch East Indian authority, and then the British, and, finally, the urban and English supremacy in the Union. The Afrikaners in South-West Africa saw their exodus as going just a bit farther in the search for large spaces and freedom.

For their cousins in the Union, the way was now open for new immigration to a country still unspoiled by large cities, with space for huge farms and ranches, and harsh deserts which made the country very hard to control for a central government. Much of the reason for the Union Afrikaners' support was the promise of a share in the spoils that came with the new territory.

While the territory was under martial law, the Union government's only policy towards settlers was to lease land that they owned to a small group of white farmers. Between 1915 and 1918, the amazingly small number of 30 white farmers moved from the Union to

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<sup>59</sup> Swanson p634.

take up land in the Protectorate, according to the Secretary of the Protectorate.<sup>60</sup> In addition, approximately 60 Union citizens had requested temporary grazing rights in Protectorate territory - mostly right across the border from their own farms.

A Land Board proposed by the Prime Minister was inaugurated in November 1919, under the chairmanship of John Adams, an inhabitant of Warrenton, but of Afrikaans extraction.<sup>61</sup>

In 1921 the Administrator, Hofmeyr announce a new land settlement policy.

The new policy was to allow settlers more time and facilities for repayment of any advances for purchasing ground, likewise for the payment of the purchase price with the interest of the actual land bought. All possible help would be given to settlers, and every encouragement would be given to others desirous of obtaining ground.<sup>62</sup>

The policy, which was implemented in 1921, followed a promise by Hofmeyr that previously German land would be given to settlers, not indigenous peoples.<sup>63</sup> It was an expansion of the promise by Smuts to provide aid to incoming settlers. From it, and following government sources, we can see how the enticement to settlers worked.

The government undertook to provide boreholes for water (very important in that desert country). It also promised to provide advances which could be used for land and stock purchases.

During 1921 and 1922 the Hofmeyr administration did all it could to encourage settlement. The Land Bank started with an outlay of £400,000

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<sup>60</sup> SP19/104, dated 28 November, 1918. From Gorges, Sect. of the Protectorate, to Smuts.

<sup>61</sup> ADM 40-20, Report of the Administrator of South West Africa for the Year 1919, 25 May, 1920.

<sup>62</sup> *Rand Daily Mail*, 10th December, 1921, in Cockram, p. 50.

<sup>63</sup> ADM 26-21, Report of the Administrator for the Year 1920, 10 March, 1921.

in capital from the administration, which also provided £85,000 in direct advances to settlers. In addition, Hofmeyr modified the Land Settlement Laws in favour of settlers.<sup>64</sup> As a result, the number of new settlers, which in 1918 was 30, totaled 730 during the years 1920,1921, and 1922. This was a significant increase in comparison to the limited white population of the territory, but probably not as much as was hoped for.

The administration also provided 56 drills for the boring of water holes. One of its most important decisions, and one that limited settlement, was to not advertise farms which did not have 'a good and permanent water supply'.<sup>65</sup> The reason for this policy is that, as Hofmeyr expressed in the 1922 Report of the Administrator, 'the [1920-1923] drought has upset all (water) calculations and the unfortunate settler who had selected a dry farm found himself in an awkward and difficult position.'

Probably one of the reasons the number of Union settlers was limited was the drought of 1920-1923. Still, there were definitely buyers for the land. In 1922, 821 farmers applied for land under the Land Settlement Proclamation - 755 of them South African citizens and about a quarter of them resident in the Union. This was during a period of drought and depression in the area, significantly, and yet still there was great interest.

The drought did threaten to imperil the settlement process in another way. In 1922, 17 percent of allotments given were surrendered back to the government. The report of the administrator declares:

The absence of rain caused the drying up of fountains, boreholes, wells, etc., on many farms, and settlers were obliged to trek to other regions where they could obtain water for their stock. Other farms

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<sup>64</sup> ADM 21-23, Report of the Administrator for the Year 1922 ,30 June 1922, p. 37.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

again, where the water supply was constant, were soon without grazing...<sup>66</sup>

According to Hofmeyr, the settlers were generally middle class (averaging 750 pounds sterling capital per family),<sup>67</sup> they were mostly Afrikaans, usually young, and usually single or with only a wife - children were rare. Hofmeyr, in a 1923 interview with the Cape Times, said 'I make bold to say that such opportunities as are offered in SWA to obtain land will never recur in South Africa.'<sup>68</sup>

The aid given to these immigrant pastoralists was more than that given to their trek-boer ancestors. Hofmeyr declared in the interview 101,567 feet drilled for 373 boreholes, £83,000 for breeding stock and implements, £400,000 for effecting improvements had been given to the settlers.

Much of the legislation and action carried out in South-West Africa was the work of the Administration, but without a doubt Smuts played a large role in both the creation and the implementation of these policies, as we see in the next four chapters.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>67</sup> "Progress in South West Africa", *Cape Times*, October 16, 1923.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 7: SMUTS AND THE GOVERNING OF SWA

The granting of the mandate had given the Union legitimacy in claiming sovereignty over South-West Africa in the eyes of the international community - the Allied and Associated Powers, the League of Nations, and the German government. But Smuts judged that international recognition was not enough to provide a secure hold on the Mandate and accomplish his goal of incorporating South-West Africa into his Union.

In order to consolidate South Africa's influence, Smuts as Defense Minister implemented martial law and as Prime Minister oversaw the actions of the South-West African administration. His goal was not only to gain acceptance of the government from the various populations<sup>1</sup> but also to link the Mandate to the Union administratively, legislatively, and economically.

In his 1920 Speech at Windhoek, Smuts told his German and Afrikaans audience that:

The Union has full power to treat South-West Africa on the same lines as any part of the Union. It can extend to South-West Africa its legal system, its judicial system, its administrative system, its financial system, its Civil Service, its Police Service, its Railway service.<sup>2</sup>

Although Smuts was mainly trying to convince the German audience of Union power and dissuade them from hoping for a return of German administration, it is obvious that Smuts was also revealing a plan

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<sup>1</sup> These efforts will be discussed in chapters 7-10.

<sup>2</sup> ADM 427/18 'Speech Delivered by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa at Windhuk' (sic), 16 September 1920, p. 5.

of action which would put the Union in a position to claim South-West Africa in the future.

Smuts had fought for something tangible at Versailles - that the Union would be able to run the Mandate without outside interference. The only limits he perceived were in the Union's treatment of the non-white population.<sup>3</sup> To his mind, South Africa could have had all the powers it would have had if it had successfully annexed South-West Africa.<sup>4</sup>

The task Smuts had set himself is clear, and he had started it five years earlier, before the surrender of the German forces had been signed, when Smuts was only Defense Minister in charge of a half-conquered territory under martial law.

#### SMUTS'S ORGANIZATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION

Before the South-West African campaign was over, Smuts was organizing the administration to suit his needs. He sent Interior Minister Sir Edmond Gorges to South-West Africa in order to compile a report on the country, and in June 1915 Botha appointed Gorges Chief Civil Secretary (later to be Administrator) for the territory.<sup>5</sup> Then, in his capacity of Defense Minister Smuts appointed Brigadier-General Percival Beves to be Military Governor of the Protectorate on 11 July.

Smuts instructions to these two men were general. Their direct supervisor was to be Smuts himself, and he advised Beves 'You will act under the direction of the Union Government and receive your

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<sup>3</sup> "There is no limit whatever, except in one respect and that is in regard to certain safeguards to protect the Natives", *ibid* p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p. 27.

instructions through me.'<sup>6</sup> It was probably quite logical for the Military Governor to receive his orders from the Minister of Defense, but this, combined with Smuts's influence on Gorges (it was Smuts who first sent him to South-West Africa), would have given him a great ability to influence the course of events in the Protectorate.

Indeed, Beves was officially superior to Gorges, since all proclamations were issued 'By Command of the Military Governor' and all civil regulations 'by and with the approval of the Military Governor.' This logically gave Smuts the ability to decide policy from Pretoria and order Beves to carry it out.

Smuts was hoping for annexation in these pre-Mandate years, and his goal during this period was to convince the League of Nations that South-West Africa was a virtual extension of South Africa. To this end the military government immediately encouraged Union investment in the Protectorate. Already in August 1915, scarcely a month after the campaign had ended, the National Bank of South Africa opened its first branch in Windhoek.<sup>7</sup>

Smuts's goal now became 'annexation in all but name'- the integration of South-West Africa into the Union to such a degree that it would eventually be inseparable by outside agencies or segments of the internal population.

As Smuts prepared to attend the Paris Peace Conference, the Union Government's attempts to prove their case for direct annexation intensified. On 29 August, 1918, Botha sent Smuts a draft of a

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<sup>6</sup> GG 9/59/98. Memorandum from Smuts to Beves advising him of his appointment to the position of Military Governor of South West Africa, dated 13 July, 1915.

<sup>7</sup> Gottschalk, 'South Africa in Namibia 1915-1980', in Saunders, Christopher, ed. Perspectives on Namibia: Past and Present, p. 92.

memorandum which was intended to assist Smuts in his efforts. One of its declarations was that 'it is obvious that the [Union] Treasury must have the same control over the expenditure of the Protectorate Administration as it possesses over the expenditure of any Union Department of State.'<sup>8</sup>

In essence, the government was proposing that the South-West African Administration become a part of the Union Cabinet. This was another step towards annexation - the creation of a federally administered territory.<sup>9</sup>

Between 1916 and April 1919, Smuts was too involved in German East Africa and Europe to take a real hand in coordinating affairs in the Protectorate, other than simply as an advisor to Botha, Gorges, and Beves. In April 1919, however, he became Prime Minister and was once again central to decision making in South-West Africa.

#### SMUTS'S ROLE WHILE PRIME MINISTER

When Smuts became Prime Minister, he had no model on which to pattern the extent of his influence in South-West Africa. However his personality, and his desire to shape affairs in the protectorate (and the rest of Southern Africa) led him to assume a large measure of responsibility for the mandate.

On 8 November, 1919, Smuts implemented his scheme for the Protectorate Administration in a memorandum entitled Interim System of Administration in South-West Africa, which was intended to organize

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<sup>8</sup> SP CXV (2) Memorandum on the Constitution and Government of the Protectorate of South West Africa, 29 August, 1918, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> It is unfortunately unclear exactly what Smuts's reply was, however we can speculate, based upon other evidence and his insistance as Prime Minister to place the administration directly under his aegis, that he was probably in favour of the proposal to turn Protectorate finances over to the Union Treasury.

the administration until the Mandate came into effect. The ideas set out in the document conformed to Smuts's integrationalist views on South-West Africa, altered to fit in with the concept of a mandate which had been agreed to by Smuts during the Paris Peace Conference.

Much of the Prime Minister's plans, set out in this memo, dealt with the financial organization of the administration. In 1918 the Union government advised that South-West African finances be run by the Union treasury. That was unfeasible by 1920, since the territory was not to be annexed. However, Smuts got as close as he could. As revealed by his Prime Ministerial papers, he ordered that most of the funds raised in the territory be controlled by the Union Government (not the Administrator of South-West Africa) - thus placing them generally under cabinet control. The Protectorate Administration was to lay its annual budget before the Union Parliament, which would then approve or amend it. However, these funds were to remain separate from the Union treasury. Instead, the Secretary to the Administrator would be the accounting officer.<sup>10</sup> However, the Union's Railways and Harbours Ministry was to retain control of revenues from the Protectorate's transportation system, and the rules governing their conduct were governed by Section 127 of the South Africa Act, thus making them an extension of the Union's transportation system in all ways.<sup>11</sup>

Equally importantly, the Prime Minister organized the bureaucracy of the administration in order to incorporate it as fully as possible into the Union. Despite Smuts's remarks to the contrary,<sup>12</sup> the Union was not

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<sup>10</sup> PM 214/2/19 of 8th November 1919, 'Interim System of Administration in South West Africa', p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 2. See also 'Railways and Harbours Administration of the Union,' Act 42 of 1916 of the Union Parliament (Parliament Papers), paragraph 5.

<sup>12</sup> 'The authority given to the Union under this Article is so complete that its practical effects are identical with annexation', ADM 427(18) 'Speech Delivered by the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister of

given authority at the Paris Peace Conference to govern South-West Africa as it pleased. It was, however, given full powers of administration. Smuts therefore made the Administrator a conduit. Each Department of State in the Union<sup>13</sup> would control the relevant officers in the Protectorate by acting through the Administrator. All these officials would remain members of the Union Service - not a separate Protectorate Service - and their posts 'w[ould] be shown in the Public Service List'.<sup>14</sup> In addition, all officers whose jobs were not directly related to a specific department of state would be directed by the Prime Minister.

Smuts personally instituted these acts for two reasons: first, combined with legislation, which the Administrator was turning out at this time, they helped integrate the territory and the Union governments. Second, they increased his own personal power in dealing with the territories.

It is hard to define Smuts's control of the administration during this period, besides the fact that his office governed the actions of many officers in the territory. Certainly, Secretary Gorges admired and listened to him. Even in 1918, when Botha was still Prime Minister, Gorges had written to Smuts to ask advice on handling Administration officers and to plead for help in finding him a good position in the Union government after the Peace was signed (and presumably his job was complete).<sup>15</sup> It is clear from the above documents, however, that Smuts intended the Union government, and him personally, to have a strong level of control over the Protectorate.

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the Union of South Africa at Windhuk (sic)', 16th September 1920.

<sup>13</sup> i.e. Education, Lands, etc.

<sup>14</sup> PM 214/2/19, 'Interim System of Administration in South West Africa', 8th November 1919, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> SP 19/103A, Gorges to Smuts, 18th November, 1918.

In 1919 Smuts was still pushing for annexation, although it had become a long-term rather than an immediate goal. To this effect, Smuts's urgings to the Imperial government helped cause Lord Milner (himself a veteran Governor-General of the Union) and later William Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister<sup>16</sup>, to produce a document allowing for future annexation of mandated territories. The document read:

If at any time the inhabitants of [mandated territory] express a desire for union with [mandatory power] and if the Allied and Associated Powers consider this desire to be bona fide and approved by a majority of the people and calculated to promote their interests, the Allied and Associated Governments may give effect to it, and in that case [mandated territory] shall be incorporated into [mandatory power] for all intents and purposes, and the Administration under this Convention shall be regarded as at an end.<sup>17</sup>

The article, which would have applied to South-West Africa as a class 'C' mandate, was never approved by the League of Nations. However, it would have given hope to Smuts that annexation could, in the future, occur.<sup>18</sup>

The end of the Protectorate period, and the official beginning of the Mandate on 1st January, 1921, witnessed a South-West African bureaucracy and legal system based upon and supervised by Smuts's government.

In fact, Smuts was planning to be directly responsible for the Mandate bureaucracy himself. In reply to an inquiry from the Japanese government, who were a mandatory power themselves, in regard to Smuts's planned administration of South-West Africa, Smuts replied 'in

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<sup>16</sup> Since Australia was also a mandatory power, it can be assumed that Hughes authored this document with his own national interests in mind.

<sup>17</sup> SP WCP 211A, 'New Clause 6 for Typical Mandate Class "C";' 14th March, 1919..

<sup>18</sup> Smuts's attempts to convince the Germans to accept South African annexation, and his enquiries of the Permanent Mandates Commission on the possibility of such an action dependant on their vote, are discussed in Chapter 9.

so far as the administration of South-West Africa is concerned, the Union Government have not established a separate office for such administration, the control whereof has been entrusted to the Prime Minister's Department.<sup>19</sup> The Prime Minister's ability to affect decisions in the Mandate quickly and efficiently was ensured.

### RAILWAYS AND HARBOURS

Smuts's decisions regarding the integration of South-West African transportation with the Union's transportation system in his 1918 memorandum were a prelude to his attempts to fully integrate the two. In his opinion, this was necessary for increased efficient trade and for financial reckoning. It would also force South-West Africans to rely on the Union for trade and transportation and thus, it was felt, encourage unification.

It is fairly obvious that Smuts perceived proclamations Nos. 69 and 70 of 1920,<sup>20</sup> which officially integrated the Union and South-West railways and harbours, as a logical extension of the Mandate. In addition, many of the railways were built by the Union, and he could have therefore effectively argued that they were Union property.

When the Union government passed Act 20 of 1922, which officially transferred the railways from South-West African finances to the Union Government, Smuts justified the act as a way of helping 'the territory [be] thus relieved of the burden of financing the railways'<sup>21</sup>. The

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<sup>19</sup> PM 13/1 No.1048 of 31st October, 1921, in reply to Governor-General's Minute No.62/2000.

<sup>20</sup> SAS 12/45 Memorandum on Railways: Parliamentary Section, of 5 January, 1921, see Chapter 6 for a full explanation.

<sup>21</sup> UG 21-24 'Report of the Administrator of South West Africa for the Year 1922', 10th April, 1923.

Union actually took a financial loss on the deal, as it was burdened with extra liabilities. It seems unlikely that Smuts aimed this action at simply alleviating the financial difficulties of the territory, since members of the Government were always agitating about the profitability of the territory to Union coffers. More probably, the increased investment of the Union government in SWA affairs was an attractive prospect to Smuts and other expansionists on his cabinet.

### WALVIS BAY

The position of Walvis Bay was ambiguous after 1918, as explained in the previous chapter. Smuts's government agitated to attach the port to the mandate, and Smuts was heavily involved in the process.

On the 16th of February, 1921, Smuts wrote a letter to the Governor-General, and hence the British representative in the Union, requesting that all proclamations issued by the Union's administrator 'shall, in so far as applicable, be operative and have the force of law within the Territory of Walvis Bay.'<sup>22</sup> The Governor-General's Proclamation 145 of 1922, partly fulfilling this wish, was much a product of Smuts's agitation.<sup>23</sup>

This issue was twofold. First, it was a sovereignty issue. Smuts felt that the enclave's presence undermined the Union's governance of the area because of its very different laws. Second, it was an administrative question, since it was unclear who had the right to control fishing, trading, and other economic activities in Walvis Bay. The Governor - General, however, did not agree.

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<sup>22</sup> GG 4/225 Minute from Smuts to Governor-General Lord Buxton, 16th February, 1921.

<sup>23</sup> Berat, L., Walvis Bay, pp. 51-52.

The *Rex vs. Mahoney* test case, which attempted to convict a Walvis Bay man for providing liquor to a Coloured man under Union law, was a setback to Smuts, and during the period he would be unable to place Walvis Bay totally under Union control, although the British allowed the Union to regulate excises and customs in Walvis Bay at the same level as the Mandate.<sup>24</sup>

### ADMINISTRATIVE RESULTS

In May 1923, Smuts wrote to Hofmeyr, his lieutenant in South-West Africa, on the future of the Mandate. He wrote of the vision he had carried around since 1918. 'In effect South-West Africa will become part of the Union, but it must not be called a province and its constitution will be somewhat different.'<sup>25</sup> In this qualified manner, Smuts still hoped to annex South-West Africa to the Union, and part of his effort was devoted to using administrative tools to do so.

The real changes he effected took place between 1918 and 1922. In those years, Smuts, Hofmeyr, and their allies used legislation, judicial cases (unsuccessfully), financial decisions, and bureaucracy in an attempt to integrate the Administration of South-West Africa into the Union Government as a step towards incorporating SWA territory into their country.

There were some successes. Union, Cape, and Transvaal laws were promulgated in the territory, which was a significant step. However, other steps were only qualifiably successful. Walvis Bay became a part of South-West Africa for tax and administrative purposes but its sovereignty was

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<sup>24</sup> Union Parliament, Act 35 of 1921, 27 May, 1921.

<sup>25</sup> SP 27(221) Smuts to Hofmeyr, 25 May, 1923.

not transferred , and the dream of eventual annexation seemed to fade away with the demise of Hughe's proposition to the League of Nations.

Smuts, however, did not depend solely on administrative actions to achieve his goal. He knew that if he could convince South African settlers, members of the German population, and blacks and coloureds to agree to annexation, the League of Nations would accept it. Between 1915 and 1924, dealing with these populations were his main concerns for South-West Africa.

## CHAPTER 8: THE PROTECTED PEOPLE

Of the three population groups discussed by Smuts in his September 1920 Windhoek speech, only one was mentioned by the Mandate for South-West Africa - the natives. Smuts, Wilson, and others who created the mandate process expressed as its purpose the protection of 'native' people.<sup>1</sup>

The 'Native' - non-white - population was a diverse group, whose constituents were included on the basis of phenotype - basically skin colour. For matters of land settlement and pass policy, three distinct peoples - Bantu, Nama (Khoisan), and Coloured - were generally considered together, although there were some exceptions. For that reason, this chapter covers Smuts's policies towards all these groups, and their disparate and collective responses.

### SMUTS: RACIST OR 'NEGROPHILE'?

Just as Jan Smuts's expansionist policy in South-West Africa was part of a greater plan for southern Africa, his native policy in the mandated territory was a product of his personal beliefs and his experiences, and reflects the formula he applied to his dealings with the native peoples in the Union - with certain differences dictated by the Administration's accountability to the League of Nations.

The recent trend towards historical revisionism has cast such major South African heroes as Rhodes and Smuts in a negative light on the matter of race. Whether or not Smuts can be portrayed today as a 'racist' is

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Chapter 5.

immaterial. For this thesis, his policy towards the black and Coloured populations of southern Africa can only realistically be viewed in light of the contemporary situation of his premiership. Two of his most comprehensive biographers tried to explain his relationship with these peoples.

Sarah Gertrude Millin completed a rather laudatory biography of Smuts in 1936, which has advantages such as being contemporary and having good access to Smuts's personal views by way of her friendliness towards the subject, but to her detriment her two volumes were far from objective for the same reason, and her work is non-academic, for she forgoes footnotes and references.

Millin is useful to us because she sets up the ambiguousness of Smuts's actions. Smuts was well known for his acceptance of whites from many different backgrounds - Jews, Germans, and others who were on the fringe of South African white society. However, Millin informed her readers, 'the welcome Smuts extends to all white races he will not offer to yellow or black.'<sup>2</sup> Smuts was not a proponent of racial mixing. 'Smuts's ideal of fusion,' Millin wrote, 'stops before the danger of lowering civilisation.'<sup>3</sup>

Still, she casts Smuts as a rational man who was immune to the anti-black jingoism of his era. He voted, she cites as an example, for the retention of the native franchise in the Cape Province in 1935.

His attitude towards the natives is different. They are in South Africa and they have rights in South Africa. He admits it. 'Africa is the Negro home.' In moods of romantic pessimism he even wonders whether Africa may not be one day the Negro empire. He

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<sup>2</sup> Millin, General Smuts, p. 224.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 225.

has an affection for the natives he employs: his manner towards them is patriarchal. He takes sweets to the native children on his farm: 'More, kinders' - 'Good morning, children,' he says, and pats their scurfy heads.<sup>4</sup>

Millin, however, fails to explain this ambiguity. She claims his impulses basically resemble those of his fellow boers. It seems simplistic to claim Smuts's attitudes towards blacks were created solely by his Afrikaans background and ignore his Cambridge education, his association with the British population of the Union, and his acknowledgment of international realities. It also does not explain where Smuts believed blacks fit into his plans (we have seen he did not plan a Negro empire.)

W.K. Hancock is probably the most credible of Smuts's biographers. He was one of the organizers of the Smuts papers, and his two volume biography is both easily-read well well-established academically. The work, written in 1962, is much more objective and factual than Millin's.

Hancock acknowledges the ambiguity in 'native policy' mentioned by Millin. He agreed that Smuts saw South Africa as 'not only white man's, but black man's country; white civilization would stand or fall there with the success or failure of the whites in dealing with their blacks.'<sup>5</sup> There was definitely a place for the blacks in Smuts's planned future.

Hancock elaborates by explaining Smuts's beliefs on that position. 'First, ' he quotes ' there must be no intermixture of blood between the two colours,' and second 'white people must build their conduct on the... Christian moral code.'<sup>6</sup> Hancock portrayed Smuts as believing in certain rights for the black population of the Union but strongly believing in

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> Hancock, *Smuts*, v2/p. 112.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p. 113., the quote is not referenced.

segregation between the populations. Hancock gives us an inkling of Smuts's plan for the blacks. In his establishment of a white civilization, blacks must participate in the new industrial life.<sup>7</sup> 'In their development', Hancock writes, 'white South Africans would be using Native labour to serve their own economic purposes.'<sup>8</sup>

Thus although Millin never really expresses Smuts's planned role for the black population, she shows the anomalies of his actions towards them, which Hancock is then able to take to their conclusion. For Smuts did not support oppression of the blacks which would alienate them from a role in society. To be sure, he did not support equality, for that would not suit his white civilisation. Instead, he saw the blacks in the role of labourers, who would also benefit from their part in creating a white society.

Smuts cannot be called a colonialist in South Africa, for he believed the Union, not Great Britain, to be his country,. His family had lived there for many generations and to him it was home. His first opportunity at colonialism came with the acquisition of South-West Africa, and his policy towards the black and Coloured populations there was basically an extension of his policy towards blacks and coloureds in the Union. However, he recognized that South-West Africa was a slightly different situation - that it was a less developed territory than the Union and that its administration would be somewhat under the authority of the League of Nations.

He foresaw, in 1918, that there would have to be some protection of these populations in the mandate, and, in a letter to President Wilson,

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 122.

listed them as 'repression of slave trade, prohibition of & sale of firearms and spirits, prohibition of raising armies, etc..'<sup>9</sup> When the Mandate was assured and Smuts became Prime Minister in 1919, he began to implement his own policy towards the blacks and coloureds alongside his wooing of settlers and his reconciliation with the Germans.

#### POLICY: 1919 - 1924

When it became clear that the League of Nations would not grant annexation, Smuts had tried for the next best thing - a mandate. The mandate granted near-annexation except for the protection of the non-white population (blacks and coloureds). The protections granted were written in Articles 3 and 4 of the Mandate for South-West Africa:

The Mandatory shall see that the slave trade is prohibited and that no forced labour is permitted, *except for essential public works and services...* shall also see that the traffic in arms and ammunition is controlled... the supply of intoxicating spirits and beverages to the natives shall be prohibited... the military training of the natives... shall be prohibited.<sup>10</sup>

Smuts had himself proposed four of these protections in his letter to Wilson... the repression of slave trade, prohibition and sale of firearms and spirits, prohibition of raising armies. They fit in well with his beliefs. He was opposed to native armies and even to arming natives, had supported acts banning alcohol sales to blacks and coloureds in the Cape Province, and was morally opposed to the slave trade. On the other hand, since he envisioned natives as labour, the prohibition of forced labour was a problem for him. The qualification 'except for essential public works

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<sup>9</sup> SP 13/A, Smuts to Wilson, undated.

<sup>10</sup> League of Nations Mandate for South West Africa, 17 December, 1920.

and services' could, however, be interpreted in various ways. In essence, therefore, Smuts gave up very little to - and the black and Coloured peoples of the territory were only technically protected by - the League of Nations mandate. There was also no apparatus set up for the non-white population to lodge complaints with the League.

Smuts's position on the 'Native's' role in the Mandate was made clear on the 16th of September, 1920, in his Windhoek Speech. Smuts did not discuss, in this speech, what safeguards the non-whites could expect. He did, however, reveal his plan for the natives - labour.

I have impressed upon them that they must work. I have told them that is the law for the white man... It is the universal experience that good but firm treatment of the Natives brings much better results out of them. <sup>11</sup>

Smuts, in this speech, obviously saw the blacks and coloureds purely as a labour force, for he told his audience 'There are too few natives in the country and their level is too low to supply adequately the labour which you require.' This speech exposed Smuts's blueprint for native affairs in the territory.

He acknowledged the Mandate's protection of the non-whites, stating repeatedly to the mostly German audience 'there is no limit whatever [to Union sovereignty] except in regard to the natives.'<sup>12</sup> Ironically, his goal was mainly to convince the Germans that the Mandate's terms did not protect them.

Mainly, however, Smuts's comments on the non-whites were concerned with labour. 'I have impressed upon them that they must work. I have told them that it is the law for the white man.' He told the

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<sup>11</sup> ADM 427(18) Speech Delivered by the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa at Windhuk, 16 September, 1920, p12.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, p. 5.

Germans that native labour, working under white supervision, would spread civilisation throughout the territory. He did warn them, however, that 'they will get much more profitable labour out of the Natives if they treat them well.'<sup>13</sup>

The rights of non-whites were often ignored by Smuts's government when they conflicted with higher priorities - such as the settlement of Union citizens in the territory. Non-white reserves, approximately 139,000 hectares of arable land, were transferred for use by immigrant Afrikaner farmers who were part of Smuts's settlement policy.<sup>14</sup>

#### SMUTS'S ROLE IN THE BONDELSWARTZ REBELLION

Smuts was in some ways responsible for the Bondelswartz uprising of 1922. The policies of settlement and indigenous labour planned by Smuts eroded their support for the government, along with other factors. The dog tax, increased by Proclamation 16 of 1921, provided a major impetus for the rebellion, which occurred in May-June 1922.<sup>15</sup>

Hofmeyr decided to resolve the rebellion without using South African regulars. However, he kept Smuts informed. He telegraphed on the 15th of May:

Sunday before I left Capetown I received urgent news that Bondelswarts in revolt though no untoward event had taken place... the cause of trouble is alleged to be the new dog tax law... I do not intend to hold demonstration of force until all peaceful methods resolved.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> UG 44-22, Report of the Administrator of SWA for the Year 1921, 10 Marcy, 1922, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2, discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>16</sup> SWAA 1836/6, Hofmeyr to Smuts, 15 May, 1922.

It appears Hofmeyr hoped to end the rebellion without having to use force. On the 15th, he still believed the rebellion to be caused directly by the dog tax. He proceeded directly to Warmbad, and wrote to Smuts several days later:

Bondelswarts... are resisting police in latters arrest five men for contravention of law... Morris who was leader hottentot rebels against Germans has returned... Am proceeding Warbad Tuesday in endeavor prevent bloodshed if possible.<sup>17</sup>

Smuts was therefore well aware of the situation, even though he told the Assembly that he had 'very meagre information' on what was happening.<sup>18</sup> However, he left it to Hofmeyr to deal with the revolt. This is indicative of the general state of their relationship. Hofmeyr as the administrator resolved most of the problems, while Smuts generally made policy decisions.

Further illustrating this point, on the 20th of May Hofmeyr asked Smuts if the SA Police might assist his forces. Smuts, however, ordered the SAP not to cross the river to assist the SWA forces.<sup>19</sup> Hancock claims that Smuts urged Hofmeyr's restraint.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the Union did send two aeroplanes, two mountain guns, and four vickers machine guns to help the attack, weapons which later proved instrumental in the subjugation of the Bondelswartz. These supplies render questionable Smuts's ability to claim absolute innocence in the affair.<sup>21</sup> Still, Smuts continued to claim very little knowledge of the affair in Parliament,

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<sup>17</sup> SWAA 1836/4, Hofmeyr to Smuts, approx. 17 May, 1922.

<sup>18</sup> The Star, 7 June, 1922.

<sup>19</sup> RPNAC Report, pp. 1031-1033, quoted in Lewis, 'The Bondelswartz Rebellion of 1922', p. 90.

<sup>20</sup> Hancock, Smuts, Vol. 2/p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis, 'The Bondelswartz Rebellion of 1922', p. 87.

replying to Hertzog only that 'five members of a tribe refused to appear before the South-West courts... the Administrator... had been compelled to take steps.'<sup>22</sup>

The Cape Times article of 1 June, 1922, 'The Bondelswartz Rising,' was the signal for popular criticism of the administration to begin, and from then on it intensified. The second attack on the administration, after that of the press, came in Parliament. On June 7th Smuts gave a report to the Parliament. Hofmeyr's job was essentially over, but Smuts's had just begun. Labour parliamentarians began calling Smuts a 'murderer' and impassionately declared he was 'steeped in blood'.<sup>23</sup>

The Star, on June 8th, reported '...in view of the responsibility of the Union as the Mandatory Power we think that before matters reached the stage they did the Prime Minister should have been more fully consulted.'<sup>24</sup> In reality, it appears Smuts was consulted. Hofmeyr telegraphed him several times and requested aid, some of which Smuts gave him.

Smuts was forced by Parliament to convene a Commission of Enquiry into the affair. Hofmeyr replied to his detractors that he 'welcome[d] fullest enquiry' and told Smuts to entrust the enquiry to a Commission of 'sufficient weight... to satisfy public opinion.'<sup>25</sup>

Smuts decided to use the Native Affairs Commission to review the incident. Publicly and privately he defended Hofmeyr. 'General Smuts,' the American Ambassador reported home on July 20th, 'expressed his

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<sup>22</sup> 'Bondelswartz Rebellion', *Cape Times*, 30 May, 1922.

<sup>23</sup> PM 21/2, Hofmeyr to Mrs. Smuts defending the Prime Minister, 28 May, 1923.

<sup>24</sup> *Star*, 8 June, 1922.

<sup>25</sup> PM 21/1 File 1/2/66, Hofmeyr to Smuts, 5 July, 1922.

own agreement with the view that there was no alternative but for the Administrator to take the action which he did.<sup>26</sup>

After submitting his own report to Parliament on the 20th of July, Hofmeyr began to worry about the attacks on his actions, and in early 1923, wrote to Smuts:

My attorney General... urges the proclamation of an indemnity measure in connection with the Bondelswartz rebellion. I am so convinced of the correctness of every step taken by me.. that I would only expose myself to the charge that I wished to cover up certain events by the protection of an indemnity.<sup>27</sup>

Smuts agreed, and replied 'In spite of opinion of law advisors I feel inclined to agree in that there is no need for indemnity proclamation.'<sup>28</sup> He backed this up with legal arguments in a later letter in which he wrote:

The Administration was consequently legally justified in suppressing the rebellion by the employment of whatever force the necessity of the case demanded.<sup>29</sup>

Smuts's argument rested on his claim to Union sovereignty. If, as he declared, the Union was the sovereign power in the territory, then it had the right to forcefully put down rebellion. The Union therefore successfully prosecuted Jacobus Christian in the celebrated *Rex vs. Christian* case discussed in Chapter 5.

Smuts used this argument in Parliament as well as before the League of Nations Permanent Mandate Commission, which next heard the case during the 3rd Session, 1923. The League assembly ended up expressing only its 'regret'.

<sup>26</sup> USA 291 of 22, American Consulate General papers, 20 July, 1922.

<sup>27</sup> PM 21/1A Hofmeyr to Smuts, 2 February, 1923.

<sup>28</sup> PM 21/1A Smuts to Hofmeyr, undated.

<sup>29</sup> SWAA 1838/8, Smuts to Secretary for Administrator, undated, p. 3. Hofmeyr did eventually issue the indemnity as Proclamation 8 of 1922.

In 1923, at the end of his tenure as Administrator, Hofmeyr sent to Mrs. Smuts a letter with an enclosed telegram which, he said 'has tremendous bearing on the debate.' The telegram, from Smuts to Hofmeyr, was written during the rebellion, and read, 'I consider time has come to start conversations with [Bondels] with a view to ending trouble amicably if possible.'<sup>30</sup>

It has become trendy to portray Smuts as a racist and a murderer, but through this telegram, written on 6 June (after the battle of Guruchas), it is clear that Smuts did not intend to wipe out the Bondels, nor in general was his policy intended to destroy the indigenous people of the territory. As stated in previous chapters, Smuts had a blueprint for South Africa, and anyone - German, black, Coloured, or conceivably Afrikaans - who opposed it or stepped out of their assigned position would gain Smuts's hostility.

Smuts cannot claim innocence in the Bondelswartz affair, but nor can he simply be blamed for the resulting slaughter. His part in the affair is indicative of his general involvement in 'native' affairs - as a policy maker. While undoubtedly a racist, because he believed in a certain position for the non-white population, Smuts intended that they would have a small share in the civilization advances his white-led superstate would bring.

#### BLACK AND COLOURED STATUS IN 1923-1924

By 1923 Smuts's major policy decisions of his first incumbency had been effected. Most of the legislative and executive decisions of the

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<sup>30</sup> PM 21/2, Hofmeyr to Mrs. Smuts, 28 May, 1923.

Administration dealing with the non-white population had been created, if not implemented, by Smuts. The Native Labour Regulations, Pass Law Proclamations, and Natives in Urban Areas Proclamations had been passed, native reserves created, and taxes introduced, to force non-whites to become a labour pool. Those who had rebelled against the moves had been put down - the Bondelswartz in 1922 and the Reheboth Basters the next year.

In creating a labouring class for whites, Smuts had been successful. But Smuts's policies must be seen in a wider view than just that one issue. Millin and Hancock both point out that Smuts believed blacks and coloureds were citizens of, and had certain rights in, their territories. Smuts would have been concerned - in a patriarchal, father way, according to Millin - about the natives. He had promised that they would share in the benefits of 'civilisation'. Therefore their economic and social status in 1923 would be a measure of his success.

The English language newspapers seem to have been particularly concerned with the position of non-whites in South-West Africa in 1923. The Cape Argus, in March, 1923, published an article entitled 'Our Mandatory Rule.' In it, the author remarked on his trip to the territory in the wake of the Bondelswartz uprising of 1922:

The anxiety and dissatisfaction which I there found expressed with regards to the Union Administration was such as to suggest that the Bondelswart affair had been merely the eruptive point of a generally unsettled condition of the non-European population.<sup>31</sup>

The Argus put the blame squarely on the shoulders of the administration, counting amongst its crimes allowing the encroachment

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<sup>31</sup> "Our Mandatory Rule", *Cape Argus*, 26 March, 1923.

of Europeans, neglecting intermediaries in discussions with tribes, and most importantly turning native land over to white settlers. The writer listed off the numerous taxes which non-whites had to pay - livestock, dog, hut, and dipping taxes. The violent crushing of the Bondelswartz tribe added to the criticism of the government and the administration.

The article also refutes the Union's claim to have bettered the natives lives. 'Vegetables, coffee, matches always,' one Herero is quoted as saying 'were supplied to all servants of Germans.'<sup>32</sup> The source also claimed the Germans clothed and fed their servants.

The German newspapers also refer to 'terrible fermentation among our natives.'<sup>33</sup> However, they present a different picture, and the Landes-Zeitung claims in several articles that the Union's administration was too lenient, allowing the black and Coloured populations to operate lawlessly.

Hofmeyr defended himself from both allegations and claimed 'the wages paid today are higher than those paid in German times.'<sup>34</sup> English-language newspapers, however, continued to blame the Administration for its harsh policies, and while Hofmeyr claimed in one interview that 'Practically all reserves have been selected in agreement with the natives,' and that 'patient labour has brought its reward', he was forced to admit that 'in SWA, I should think one would be wise to be prepared for native unrest in one form or another.'<sup>35</sup>

The situation of most non-whites in 1923 was one of poverty and disgruntlement. The policies instituted by Hofmeyr and Smuts, while

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> "Anarchical Native Conditions", *Landes-Zeitung*, 12 August, 1922.

<sup>34</sup> "What of the South-West Protectorate?", *Cape Times*, 21 March, 1923.

<sup>35</sup> "The Natives and Change in SWA", *Cape Times*, 5 April, 1923.

providing labour for the white population, failed to live up to the promise in the Mandate document to 'promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and the social progress of the inhabitants of the territory...'<sup>36</sup>

Smuts had a limited but influential role in these affairs. In some instances Smuts made policy and involved himself in implementing it, and in others simply corresponded and advised Hofmeyr, who made the final decision.

The case of the Bondelswartz uprising, however, gives us interesting insight into the role Smuts played in one of the most important interactions with the native population during the period 1919-1924. In 1923 the League of Nations Permanent Mandate Commission Chairman Marquis Theodoli was vehement in his attack on the Union's policies, stating that:

The Administration has pursued a policy of force rather than persuasion.... in the interests of the colonists... However the fundamental principle of the mandates was that 'first in importance come the interests of the natives, and secondly the interests of the whites.'<sup>37</sup>

In critiquing the Union's policy, Theodoli captures Smuts's influence in regard to the Bondelswartz affair and 'native' affairs in General. The non-whites, for Smuts, were there as labourers for the whites. The dog tax, which was so infuriating to the Bondels, was implemented for that purpose. They were also to be moved to make space for Smuts's settlers, and for that reason their reserve was encroached upon.

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<sup>36</sup> League of Nations, The Mandate for South West Africa, 17 December, 1920.

<sup>37</sup> Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p. 160.

Smuts was not responsible for the incident between Morris and the Protectorate police which started the Bondelswartz rebellion, but he did set the groundwork for the general dissatisfaction of the tribe through his policies.

Smuts cannot be blamed for the use of force - that was Hofmeyr's decision. Smuts did, however, supply arms to the Administrator and he cannot claim ignorance of his actions. In addition, he continually supported him after the incident.

Similarly, in dealing with indigenous people in general, Smuts had an indirect but powerful influence. Although Hofmeyr's administration carried out most of the decisions, it was Smuts's perceptions of the role, rights, and position of non-whites which dictated the status of South-West African blacks and coloureds by 1924.

## CHAPTER 9: SMUTS AND THE GERMANS

### 'HE CANNOT LOOK TO GERMANY'<sup>1</sup>

In every war, along with victors, there exist the vanquished. The Germans in South-West Africa at the end of 1918 were members of a beaten nation. Their colony was occupied by a foreign force, and their homeland had been forced to surrender. Throughout 1918 and 1919 the Treaty of Versailles was written, which placed the blame for the First World War fully upon their people and called for monetary reparations, the loss of their colonial empire, even the annexation of parts of their country. They did not know what the future held for them - repatriation to a nation in the midst of depression seemed most likely - and they were anxious about their future.

Jan Smuts was the man who had their future most in his hands. Smuts had led some of the forces which invaded South-West Africa and now, as Prime Minister of the Union, he was the leader of the power occupying it. But Smuts was no Germanophobe. During the war, he had said 'I love German thought and culture and hope it will yet do much for mankind,'<sup>2</sup> and in his 1920 speech in Windhoek he admitted 'we shall in South-West Africa be all the better for a knowledge of Schiller and Goethe and the treasures of wisdom in them.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ADM 427(18) Speech Delivered by the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, at Windhoek, 16 September, 1920, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> SP 12/162, Smuts to Arthur Gillett, 27 September, 1914.

<sup>3</sup> ADM 427(18) p. 8-9.

The Germans, Smuts stated 'have proved themselves excellent colonists.'<sup>4</sup> He promised, 'they will find the Government sympathetic to them and will use all endeavors to help them over their difficulties.' However, while Smuts obviously tried to win the loyalty and affection of the Germans, he cautioned them to respect the Union's power:

This country with its population is entrusted to the Union. And the Union, therefore, is the only country which can speak for them and act for them both here and internationally. It is quite clear... that the position of the German population in an annexed territory... is a difficult one. In the other mandated territories the difficulty has been overcome by the repatriation of the German population.<sup>5</sup>

That threat could scarcely have been missed by his German audience. But Smuts pointed out that the Union had not forcibly repatriated the Germans. He warned them that they could turn to neither the League of Nations nor the German government and urged them to think about their future. 'For the German population of South-West Africa it is a very serious question to consider for the future what they are going to do in the position which they are placed.'<sup>6</sup>

In warning the Germans that they could not expect help from the League of Nations, Smuts pointed out that 'There is no limit whatever [to the Union's sovereignty], except in one respect, and that is in regard to certain safeguards to protect the natives.'<sup>7</sup>

Yet Smuts did not intend the Union to be a harsh occupier. Instead, he was prepared to be a magnanimous conqueror because he foresaw a role for the Germans - not just as citizens of South-West Africa, but as

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

partners of the British and Afrikaners, members of the white race that would lead the southern African superstate he was building. To this end, Smuts was willing to extend both his personal and the Union Government's support to the German populations - but only if he could ensure that they would be productive pro-Union members of the coalition. Thus his policy towards the Germans between 1919 and 1924 had the goal of legally and psychologically assimilating the German population by deftly allowing them to retain their culture, while forcing them to renounce their citizenship. In these pursuits, Smuts was constantly personally involved.

#### REPATRIATIONS AND COMPLAINTS

Smuts fully supported the 1919 repatriations, both in order to exclude Germans he did not like and as a threat towards the rest of the German population. During his September 1920 speech, he reminded the Germans that 'the Union Government have thought it desirable to retain the bulk of the German population' but warned 'they cannot look to the German Government for protection.'<sup>8</sup>

Not many of the South-West African Germans wanted to leave, even though Governor-General Bourne urged many to. He noted in a letter to Smuts that 'comparatively few wish to return [to Germany]'<sup>9</sup>

The repatriation of part of the German population was a victory for the Union Government. It had managed to exclude those Germans who it felt threatened its sovereignty. But while the remaining population did

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> SP WCP LXIV/91

not instigate significant protests over the issue, they were a long way from being loyal citizens, and there were many more long-term complaints which the Administration had to face, and Smuts was very aware of this.<sup>10</sup>

The repatriations were quickly followed by Smuts's visit to the territory in 1920. In asserting their rights during this visit, the German population declared as the main concerns: 'the continuation of German institutions, introduction of German capital, return of repatriated Germans, a new German consulate, the use of German as the official language, and the retention of the German Civil Code,'<sup>11</sup> as well as German-medium education, in short, a return to German rule unofficially or no. Smuts, of course, could not agree to this, and in a large part the speech quoted so lavishly in this dissertation was a reply to that... a rebuttal of their complaints and a reply that they must accept that the Union was their new master. But although harsh in his admonition, Smuts continued throughout 1920-24 to compromise with the German population. The Cape Times said 'it will be seen that the Prime Minister has indicated a fair and generous policy of development in the mandated territory.'<sup>12</sup> The SWA Germans may not have agreed in September 1920, but many of Smuts's future actions were carefully chosen to curry their favour.

Smuts was certain, for example, to include them in the economic assistance plan which he held out to settlers in South-West Africa in 1922, during a drought year.<sup>13</sup> However, he supported the removal of the

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<sup>10</sup> See especially PM 13/1/22 of 4 July, 1922, in which Smuts enumerates the many problems.

<sup>11</sup> *The Times*, September 20, 1920, quoted in Swanson p. 653.

<sup>12</sup> "The South-West Mandate. Future of German Population", *Cape Times*, September 18, 1920.

<sup>13</sup> UG 21-23, Report of the Administrator for SWA for the Year 1922, 10 April 1923, p. 38.

German Civil Law when it was replaced by Roman-Dutch Law in 1919,<sup>14</sup> for the Union Government could not sacrifice their general plan to logistically integrate South-West Africa into the Union just to please a portion of the population.

In his Windhoek speech of 1920, Smuts dealt with the issue of education, which was important to the German population, by espousing Union-language medium at the higher levels. He pointed out to the crowd that 'In [this] way they will not only learn their own language and literature properly, but it will be possible for them to pass Union examinations in a Union language.'<sup>15</sup> He was thinking of the interests of the Union - with South-West Africa as a fifth province. In education and in official language, he said, the Union must be unified.

Because of economics and national pride, issues discussed in Chapter 6, the German population was able to keep a number of its children in private schools, and this spelled the failure of Hofmeyr's education policies. By 1923 Smuts was personally fed up with the situation and subsequently took personal charge. In his proposal for his upcoming summit with the German government in London, Smuts designed to support certain German private schools for 50 percent of their expenditures for two years.<sup>16</sup>

His ideas were met with vehement opposition. The British Secretary of State for the Colonies wrote 'My knowledge of Germans of South-West Africa... impels me to submit that it might be unwise to grant them semi-subsidized German schools... once they are brought up as true

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<sup>14</sup> UG 40-20, Report of the Administrator of South-West Africa for the Year 1919, 25 May 1920, p.1.

<sup>15</sup> ADM 427/18, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> SWAA 1315/3 Memorandum w/copy of the London Agreement, 23 October 1923.

Germans imbued with German traditions and culture it matters little what nationality they outwardly profess.<sup>17</sup>

Hofmeyr was even more ardent in his antagonism to the idea. He wrote, in a 19 October letter, that the proposal was prompted by Germans who did not recognize the Union's suzerainty, who would now grow up separately, outside the Union Government's control. He feared that German children would now leave the public schools in droves. Additionally, he confided to Smuts,

[I] cannot emphasize too strongly that by grant of subsidy we hand back only key we hold to attain our ultimate object. It will nullify progress thus far made, which is substantial, and will mean irretrievable backward step.<sup>18</sup>

This might be a sentiment with which one would expect Smuts to agree. Certainly his understanding of the *ultimate object* was the same as Hofmeyr's - the annexation of South-West Africa. Smuts, however, had to balance the long-term assimilation of the German population with the short-term goal of gaining their goodwill. He knew he needed them as allies, and soon, for he foresaw an annexation vote in the next few years and wrote to Marquis Theodoli, Chairman of the Permanent Mandates Commission, that 'the Union Government now propose to submit legislation to the Union Parliament next year in the sense of the memorandum [on future government of SWA] submitted to the Council.'<sup>19</sup> If Smuts desired a vote shortly, he needed the support of the nearly 9,000 Germans now living in South Africa. As he told Theodoli,

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<sup>17</sup> GG 4/246, memorandum from Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor-General of the Union, 19 October 1923.

<sup>18</sup> PM 21/26, telegram from Hofmeyr to Smuts, 19th October, 1923.

<sup>19</sup> USC 801.4 Despatch No.566 of US Consul to South Africa, enclosure, letter from Smuts to Theodoli, 16 May, 1923.

...I feel that to extend our institutions to the Union population in the mandated territory to the exclusion of the comparatively large German minority would be in every way undesirable. Our whole policy in South-West Africa has been to extend uniform equal treatment as far as possible to both sections of the white population.<sup>20</sup>

Smuts thus approached the London Conference of October 1923, firmly resolved to compromise with the Germans on the issue of education despite the objections of his advisors. He was willing to throw a bone to the Germans on the question of education in return for a victory on the more important issue of citizenship - an issue he hoped would bind them more firmly to the Union than anything else could.

### CITIZENSHIP

In discussing the question of the Union Government's treatment of German citizenship in South-West Africa, it may seem that the idea evolved throughout the period 1919-1924. In fact, for Smuts at least, the idea was there from the very beginning. In his 1920 Windhoek speech, he declared

We do not want to hurry or force [the German population] in any way. We wish to treat them with perfect fairness, and let them consider what is best in their own interests... To my mind, however, there is no other solution possible than that they should decide to become citizens of the Union.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> ADM 427/18, p. 6.

While Smuts's mind was made up on the issue, others were not as sure. The Germans in the territory, for example, still looked to Germany for guidance and hoped for a return of German governance for the colony.<sup>22</sup> The League of Nations, which had rejected annexation of the territory, was also not convinced of the necessity of giving Union or British citizenship to the Germans, nor was the German government undivided in its support for the measure. Lastly, Smuts's advisors, while supporting the idea, were divided on what form the action was to take.

Smuts, however, was never one to back down before opposition. He needed the Germans to be loyal allies of the Afrikaner-British alliance he was building to civilize southern Africa, and of what use was his decision not to repatriate them if they would not become assimilated within the Union? Education, the propagation of Union laws, and new legal practices could only go so far. Smuts concluded that if the Germans were not made Union citizens they would not look to the Union for support and governance.

Smuts agreed with the analysis of his 1920 Commission to Report on the Future of Government in South-West Africa<sup>23</sup> and also supported the alternative of mass naturalization, as suggested by the Commission<sup>24</sup>. It would be easier to carry into effect and encourage a far greater rate of naturalization. He recognized, however, that there would be several obstacles to enacting this legislation. The first was the questionable claim of the Union to be able to do this in a League of Nations 'C' class mandate.

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<sup>22</sup> This is, in fact, what prompted Smuts's declaration.

<sup>23</sup> UG 24-21, 'Interim Report on the Commission appointed to enquire into the question of the future form of Government in the South-West Africa Protectorate', 11 November, 1920, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 6.

Additionally, both the German government and the Germans in the Mandate might object to the forceful handling of their rights.

Between 1920 and 1922, Hofmeyr and others plugged away at the problem with little success. In 1922, however, Smuts took the debate permanently into his hands. In that year, he addressed the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, which embodied the limited supervisory powers of the League. He ordered Major Herbst and Sir Edgar Walton, the Union's representatives to the PMC, to present the 1920 report to the Commission. The PMC decided, before the League of Nations in 1922, that:

It is for the Mandatory Powers, to whom territories are entrusted under C Mandate, to regulate, in conformity with their legislation, the acquisition individually, of their own free will, of the Nationality of the Mandatory by foreigners settled in these territories...<sup>25</sup>

The Commission, however, was unconvinced that the planned block naturalization of all German citizens (sans those who formally objected) would fit this decision. They relented in April 1923, however, and withdrew their objections to the plan. Their acceptance was based upon the fact that, while natives of 'C' class mandates were distinct from the mandatory power, and 'not invested with the nationality of the mandatory Power by reason of the protection extended to them', non-native inhabitants could 'voluntarily' accept naturalization from the mandatory power.<sup>26</sup>

Smuts then wrote to Marquis Theodoli, the chairman of the Commission, saying 'The acceptance of a uniform Union citizenship

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<sup>25</sup> PMC II. P.20, quoted in Taylor, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> PMC, quoted in Cockram, p. 170.

under a general law seems the simplest solution, and it commends itself generally to both sections of the white population in South-West Africa'.<sup>27</sup>

Smuts had been the central figure in convincing the League of Nations to allow for naturalization, and he now became involved in the resolution which would provide for naturalization. He keenly felt the need for German support and asked Hofmeyr '...if you could, induce the Germans to write a letter to me, asking the same action.'<sup>28</sup> He asked Hofmeyr to point out that if the naturalization vote passed, the Germans would be offered a vote in the constitutional bill to be presented in 1925.

Smuts was not deterred by the opposition of segments of the German population which emerged from the vote, which passed in the territory but failed in Windhoek, because he knew he could sweeten the deal for them by changing his education or economic policies. His plan was to get the blessing of the German government, which would, he hoped, convince the German segment of his population to accept British citizenship. It was for this reason that the London Conference of October 1923 was planned.

### THE LONDON CONFERENCE

The support of the German government was critical to Smuts for several reasons. Primarily, it seemed obvious that the German government, which still enjoyed strong support amongst its countrymen in South-West Africa, could induce them to accept the forthcoming

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<sup>27</sup> USC 801.4 Despatch No.566 of US Consul to South Africa, enclosure, letter from Smuts to Theodoli, 16 May, 1923.

<sup>28</sup> SP 27/221, Smuts to Hofmeyr, 25 May, 1923.

changes. Those who did not follow Germany's lead would feel their country's abandonment strongly and agree to naturalization. Additionally, the support of the German government would give legitimacy to the Union's actions in front of the international community.

Smuts proceeded to organize a meeting with Mr. de Haas and Dr. Ruppel, representatives of the German Weimar Republic.

The resulting agreement was published in a memorandum of 23 October, 1923. Because Smuts was the South African delegate, and as Prime Minister reported only to himself and a friendly parliament, much of the agreement bears his mark.

How much did Smuts really give away? The eleven points he conceded might seem substantial, but it is probable that pre-conference communications between the two parties had led him to expect many of the concessions.

That Germans share the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship was perfectly acceptable to Smuts, for it would make them better allies for the Union. The immigration of Germans and their representation on proto-government committees would have the same effect, helping to assimilate them. The extension of the Workmen's Compensation Act was perfectly in line with Smuts's policy of imparting Union laws unto the territory; and in agreeing to pay former civil servants pensions, Smuts had ensured they would become Union citizens by compelling them to become naturalized in order to receive their pay. German churches and missions had been well treated by both Hofmeyr and Gorges, and it was no detriment to the Administration to continue to do so.

In fact, many of these concessions may have been planned and suggested by Smuts. They gave away almost nothing and produced huge benefits for the Union and the Administration. Perhaps the only true concessions were the agreement to help fund the two German schools, which Smuts included against the objections of the Administrator and the Governor-General, the use of the German language in addition to Afrikaans and English in public correspondence, and the promise that the population would not have to take arms against the German government for 30 years. The school funding and German language clauses were indeed a change to Smuts's plans, but they were the carrot with which Smuts hoped to bribe the German population into concordance with his wishes. In return for these minor concessions, Smuts received what he wanted - the support of the German government for his naturalization plans.

Smuts's letter to de Haas following the conference was both laudatory to the German officials and conciliatory towards the German population of the Mandate. He stated that Germans and Union citizens had worked for the common good in South-West Africa, but:

The natural feelings of the [former] have prevented them from doing anything which might be construed as disloyal to their Fatherland. The German Government have now removed this difficulty and I have no doubt that they will act on your advice and accept the new citizenship in a good and loyal spirit.<sup>29</sup>

Smuts's statements may have been a bit optimistic, for the actions of the SWA Germans were provoked by more than just their loyalty to Germany. Instead, their insistence upon German language and schooling

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<sup>29</sup> SWAA 1315/4 Letter from Smuts to de Haas, 23 October, 1923.

was sustained more by a cultural than a national pride. Still, de Haas's reply made the German government's position clear.

De Haas first commended Smuts on the Administration, stating in the name of the German government that 'the Administration... has been successful in endeavoring to ameliorate the position of the Germans living there as much as possible.' He then proceeded to fulfill his part of the London Agreement, stating:

Recognizing that the future of South-West Africa is now bound up with the Union of South Africa... the German Government are prepared to use their influence with these Nationals to induce them to accept Union citizenship under a general naturalization law of the Union and to advise them not to exercise their rights of declaring themselves outside of that citizenship.<sup>30</sup>

This may have appeared the successful conclusion of the question. Smuts returned and informed 13 notables of the German population, chosen by Hofmeyr, of the agreement. There are signs, however, that there was some opposition and resentment towards the decision. A 1937 document submitted by a German in opposition to the possible annexation of the territory, objected that:

The German [notables] expected that the whole question of future voting rights in the Territory would now be fully discussed with the Prime Minister. When the deputation arrived at Capetown [sic] the agreement entered into at London was explained to it and the members of the commission had merely to take notice of the accomplished facts.<sup>31</sup>

The German community, in fact, was not consulted on the terms of the agreement, although both sides professed to be acting for its best interests. Smuts, however, wanted to go ahead with his plan to provide a

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<sup>30</sup> SWAA 1315/3 Letter from de Haas to Smuts, 23 October, 1923.

<sup>31</sup> PEN 264, Comments on the Report of the South-West Africa Commission, Submitted by Dr. H.B.K. Hirsekorn on behalf of the German population of South-West Africa, 17th March, 1937, p. 11.

legislative, limited form of self-government to the territory (as each of the provinces maintained), and to legitimize it he needed German participation.

### SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF SMUTS'S GERMAN POLICY

It was only after Smuts's defeat by Hertzog in the June 1924 elections that his fight to naturalize the Germans came to fruition. In September 1924 the Naturalization of Aliens Act was applied to South-West Africa, with an added Section 2 which stated that each adult male European who was domiciled in South-West Africa in 1924, and who had lived there during German rule, would automatically become a British subject, unless he provided a written declaration that he did not so desire.<sup>32</sup>

The vote might be counted a victory, because out of 3,400 adult male Germans, only 240 chose not to become British citizens.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, the choice of method was instrumental in this result, because it was far simpler to just sit by and become a British citizen than to go to the local government office and sign a document refusing naturalization.

The articles of the London Agreement were implemented in 1924, in part because Smuts demanded this - while the Administration of the Mandate opposed their immediate implementation.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, in the short-term Smuts was technically successful in implementing this agreement. The long-term effects of his policies will be discussed in the conclusion.

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<sup>32</sup> UG 21-25, Report of the Administrator of SWA for the Year 1924, April 1925.

<sup>33</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, 1st session, 2nd part, 4th committee, Pt. 1., Annex 13, Doc A/123, Statement of the Union of South Africa, Oct. 1946, in Cockram, p. 171.

<sup>33</sup> See PM LN13/13, Hertzog to Secretary for South-West Africa, 27th June, 1924.

Smuts maintains that the German population of South-West Africa became allies in 'the building up of European civilisation on the African continent, which is the main aim of the Union.'<sup>34</sup> It was an alliance, however, and not an assimilation. The London agreement granted the Germans the right to use their language and learn it in their schools, although they held Union citizenship.

Smuts believed that the technicality of their naturalization was the first step in bringing them into his grand plan - his 'Monroe Doctrine for the South.' To this end, he was willing to barter away language and schooling rights for the time being, trusting that the large majority of them would see the benefits of Union citizenship, that the public schools would slowly wean their children - from Standard IV onwards - away from the German language, and that in time they would become members of his white coalition.

From the view of 1924, with 92 percent of the Germans accepting naturalization, he appeared to have been successful, and it was a success he could personally enjoy. As Prime Minister, Smuts had taken a personal approach to the German question, engaging not just in discussions, but in actions. He led the efforts to assimilate the population and ignored his advisors in a bid to compromise with the German population and bring them 'into the fold.' For better or for worse, the German policy in South-West Africa was Smuts's policy.

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<sup>34</sup> SWAA 1315/4 Letter from Smuts to de Haas, 23 October, 1923.

## CHAPTER 10: THE UNION SETTLERS

Smuts had a blueprint for South-West Africa, and his plans did not rely solely on non-whites and Germans, whose loyalty was questionable. For Smuts, the point of expansion was not the rulership of other people but the occupation of land for the expansion of his own people - the Union's Boers and Britons. South-West Africa, to him, was a land of spoils:

It is a good country... for ranching it is probably one of the best in the World... It wants a white population and it wants capital. It is impossible to run this as a civilized country with a hand-full of whites... As a white population comes here and the country becomes settled and occupied by white people you will find a very great change.<sup>1</sup>

For those in the Union who lived in the city and who made business their livelihood, the new mandate represented mineral rights, harbours, markets, and labour. But for many of the rural farmers, South-West Africa represented a chance to make the Afrikaner dream come true, and they set out to take it. Jan Smuts was determined to help them all.

When Parliament had acceded to Smuts and Botha's request that the Union invade South-West Africa in 1915, Botha had told them that 'If we do not conquer German South-West Africa, the English will do it... It is ours, and it is our affair',<sup>2</sup> and on the 2nd October Smuts said, 'German South-West Africa [will] again form part of our Afrikaans heritage.'<sup>3</sup> This was not the business logic of the British Empire but an impassioned

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<sup>1</sup> ADM 427(18) 'Speech Delivered by the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa at Windhoek (sic)', 16 September, 1920, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Star*, September 10, 1914, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> SP 12/143A., 2 October, 1915.

statement by a leadership in touch with the Afrikaner's feelings and needs - South-West Africa, Botha and Smuts assured their people, 'is ours.'

While he was at the Peace Conference, Smuts received a letter from Gorges, the Secretary for the Protectorate, on the Settler question. Smuts had been concerned by the issue but had been fully occupied in Europe while Botha ran the Union and the protectorate as Prime Minister. Gorges sent Smuts his opinions because he knew Smuts was beginning the fight to gain sovereignty over the Protectorate. The letter appears unsolicited.

Gorges had been busy evaluating the unoccupied land available for settlement and was anxious to begin the process properly.

I think you should commence to consider the terms which you will be prepared to offer to intending settlers. They should be liberal to the proper people... This country, as you know, is no place for the man who has nothing.<sup>4</sup>

This statement revealed to Smuts what he would be forced to find out again himself during his trip to SWA a year later, that using rhetoric to encourage settlement did not mean that serious immigration would occur. Gorges enumerated the challenges of setting up farms:

A fairly substantial capital is necessary for the purchase of breeding stock, and owing to the aridity of the country boring for water or sinking wells is an absolute necessity. So that, quite apart from the cost of the ground, the expense of starting will be relatively high and we must remember that the farmer must house, clothe, and feed himself and family and pay his servants during the period - anything from two to four years - in which his stock is growing up and becoming fit for the market.

Gorges advised Smuts that most settlers would be people with little or no money and that the government would have to provide capital and

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<sup>4</sup> SP 19/104, 28 November, 1918, from Gorges to Smuts.

land for them. For Smuts, this was not a deterrent to a plan that he believed was the logical extension of the Union

Smuts, in fact, was fully committed to Union settlement of the new area. As far as he was concerned, settlement of the Protectorate was the main reason behind the Union's expansion - for South-West Africa was not to be ruled as a colony but, as Smuts ensured that the Mandate article said, 'as an integral portion'<sup>5</sup> of the Union. In order for this to occur, Smuts knew that Union citizens must become the bones and sinews of the region, binding South-West Africa to the Union so that in the future it could become *de jure*, as well as *de facto* a part of the Union.

Smuts as a delegate in Paris was could only set the framework from afar for this transformation from a German colony to a Union province. But Smuts the leader of the Union of South Africa could implement actual change. Therefore, when in late August 1919 Smuts became the Prime Minister of the Union, he set about his task immediately.

### SWA SETTLER POLICY UNDER SMUTS

Between 10-13 September Smuts pushed through the South African House of Assembly his bill, the 'South-West Africa Mandate Act', which would accept the League of Nations Mandate when it was offered ( the League did not officially offer it until December 1920).<sup>6</sup> In this drive he was opposed by the Nationalists led by Barry Hertzog, who argued that South-West Africa would be prohibitively expensive for the Union.<sup>7</sup> Smuts agreed that it would be expensive, saying that 'it would be necessary

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<sup>5</sup> The Mandate for South-West Africa, League of Nations, 17 December, 1920.

<sup>6</sup> Union House of Assembly, Act 49 of 1919, 13 September, 1919.

<sup>7</sup> *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 September, 1919, in Cockram, p. 50.

to open up the country, put in water bores, etc.; so as to make the land more useful for settlement purposes.' However, he argued, 'the country offer[s] great potentialities and can accommodate a large population.'<sup>8</sup> His argument against concerns about cost was, therefore, that the new territory could sustain a large settler population.

After the successful vote on the Act, Smuts spoke at Fraserburg on the 28 of September, and the *Rand Daily Mail* paraphrases him as saying:

The government was anxious to develop that country as fast as possible... he considered it desirable to get a good strong Africander population settled there, so as to mix with the German population. It would not be good, he felt, just to leave the German population there alone, but the two sections would be able to mix. A Land Board would shortly be appointed, and as soon as all the necessary steps had been taken for the boring of water it was intended to proceed with the settlement plan.

Smuts not only used this speech to expound on his ambitions, but also to disclose his plans, because the time for words was over, and Smuts intended to take action, using the administration he had set in place in the Mandate to entice Union citizens to move into the newly opened territory.

There are two interesting things to note about the 1919 Land Board which are revealed by the Administrator's report.<sup>9</sup> First, the administrator complains that the land board fell directly under the control of the Union Government, and hence Smuts.<sup>10</sup> It appears that Smuts saw the settler question as important enough to warrant his personal control (through the Lands Department). Second, the department offices were filled by Union citizens, along with the Deeds and Survey Offices. While this may have inhibited their usefulness for the German population, it

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<sup>8</sup> 'Settlement in the Protectorate', Cape Times, 13 September, 1919.

<sup>9</sup> ADM ..., Report of the Administrator of South-West Africa for the Year 1919, 25 May, 1920.

<sup>10</sup> The report reads 'As, however, they are directly under the administration of the Lands Department of the Union it does not fall to me to report upon their activities.'

made Union settlement much easier, pointing out the primary objectives of these departments,<sup>11</sup> which was to provide Union settlers with aid in establishing their farms.

There is little doubt that Smuts's government agreed with Hofmeyr's policies, including not making available plots without available water, since Smuts's people controlled the Land Board and it is clear they cooperated closely with the Administration. However, the acts themselves seem to have been instigated by the Administrator's office, not by Smuts.

The provision of drills for boreholes and monetary advances/loans proved the commitment of the Union government to settlement throughout the territory, but its unwillingness to provide willing settlers with un-watered lands showed its good sense. Smuts may have had as a primary goal the expansion of the Union into this area but he was unwilling to expose them to untenable positions.

Smuts's reply to the 1920-23 drought and depression was to instruct Hofmeyr to help the general populace:

As I said to you it will probably be impossible to prevent certain people from going under. But we shall have to watch carefully the general condition of the people as a whole... The rank and file of the population should be saved from ruin, and any great setback of the German population will affect the Union population also.<sup>12</sup>

Smuts's instructions clash with the idea that he was uniformly interested in promoting Union settlers over the Germans. In fact, although his patronage for the settlers was secure, he saw as their partners the German populace, telling them in his 1920 speech in Windhoek,

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<sup>11</sup> The report reads 'they have been handicapped by the want of qualified men with a knowledge of German.'

<sup>12</sup> Smuts Papers 27/221., Smuts to Hofmeyr, 1922.

'With long years of peace and quiet before us, and hearty cooperation between all sections of the people, I am sure the country will advance rapidly and become inhabited by a large progressive population.'<sup>13</sup>

Still, Smuts's advocacy of the settler process was stronger than his support for the German population, and despite the depression's effect on the administration, in 1923 well boring was proceeding apace in order to enable a larger number of farms to be allotted in 1924.<sup>14</sup> Because of the drought, the number of farms provided and the number of settlers interested had both declined, although early 1924 showed a slight resurgence.

It is obvious that the settlement process was continued during this hard period because of the government's, particularly the Prime Minister's, support for the process as a means to bring the Mandate closer to the Union. The only other logical argument would be that it was a financial measure, and this is unlikely for several reasons. First, the allotting of farms was not nearly as profitable as urban allotments, which the government did not advertise as strongly. In addition, the administration sold many of these farms during a price depression, rather than waiting for an increase.

For Smuts, the issue was not money but expansion - expansion for the Union, and expansion for the Afrikaans people. He did not concentrate personally on attracting businesses to Swakopmund or Windhoek, although that was one of the administration's goals, because although it was a financial objective, it did not appeal to his passion, nor was it as vital to Smuts's plan of incorporating the Mandate into his

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<sup>13</sup> ADM 427/18, 16 September, 1920, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> UG 21-24, Report of the Administrator for 1923, p38, 31 March, 1924.

future hegemony. The settlement of South-West Africa with strong, white settlers would provide a backbone for the territory when it became part of the Union, a process Smuts hoped would be repeated all over southern Africa.

Hancock argues that Smuts supported settlers in South-West Africa because of a belief in South-West Africa as 'a part of our Afrikaans heritage, <sup>15</sup> ' to be peopled 'once again' by Afrikaners.' The passion Smuts felt for the settlers, the administrations appointments of Afrikaners to official posts, the advances for cattle farming, which did not exist for urban development - all these points to Smuts's support for Afrikaans settlers.

The fact is, however, that Smuts's encouragement of the settlers was more a promotion of his 'Monroe Doctrine for the South<sup>16</sup>.' He urged a partnership between the Afrikaners and the Germans and did not distinguish between British and Afrikaans settlers. Smuts was not an 'Afrikaner.' Smuts was a white South African. He did not call for an increase in Afrikaans settlers but encouraged white settlers to move into the territory. It was Smuts's expansionism, and not his ethnicity, which was the driving force behind his personal support of the Union immigrants into the Mandate.

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Hancock, Smuts, v1/p. 385.

<sup>16</sup> Refer to chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION

Smuts's strategy in Namibia during the period 1914 and 1924 can be seen as an extension of his personal views on expansion and his commitment to the successful creation of a white-led African state with hegemony over the region, based on the Union of South Africa.

His involvement can be divided into three distinct stages, although they overlapped chronologically: Between 1914 and 1916 he prepared for and helped lead a campaign to physically conquer the territory and to establish a protectorate in it. In 1916 he also began his fight to establish a legitimate Union sovereignty over the Protectorate before the international community, at first through annexation, and then through a gradual process under the mandate. From the 1918 Paris Peace Conference to the 1923 *Rex vs. Christiaan* case, he used various methods to press the Union's claim rather than the potential claims of the League of Nations and Great Britain. During this period, and especially as Prime Minister from 1919 to 1924, Smuts initiated attempts to assimilate the territory by integrating the territory's laws with those of the Union, introducing Union settlers, absorbing the German people, and organizing the non-white population along Union lines.

In summarizing the dissertation, this chapter has three purposes: The first is to evaluate the effect of Smuts's personal role on these various processes, the second is to gauge the successes and failures of the policies and acts he organized in reaching the conclusion he pursued - the expansion of the Union into South-West Africa. The last part of this chapter will look at Smuts's relationship with South-West Africa in the post-1924 world.

### SMUTS'S ROLE - A SUMMARY

Jan Smuts was the most significant personality in shaping the future of the relationship between South-West Africa and South Africa between the years 1914 and 1924. The most important aspect of his operations in regard to South-West Africa was his belief in and work towards Union expansion into the territory.

Hancock argued that Smuts supported the war out of personal loyalty. Smuts's strong loyalty to Campbell-Bannerman and England certainly existed, but they alone do not suffice to explain Smuts's passionate involvement in the campaign of 1915. Nor does L'ange's argument that it was an exercise in Anglo-Boer unity, or Swanson's insistence that it was a question of security, for the war was damaging to internal stability and split the Afrikaners. Furthermore, 4,000 German regulars were no threat to a Union which had a standing army ten times the size and a large militia, thanks to Smuts's Defense Bill.<sup>2</sup> The only realistic explanation is Smuts's desire for expansion. Garson, who argued that 'Smuts's African policy amounted to the single-minded pursuit of formal expansion from the Union as base,'<sup>4</sup> perceived this. However, he and other historians have explained it as either British-style imperialism or the heritage of Afrikaans trekking. Instead, it was a major step in Smuts's self-avowed attempt to create a white superstate in Southern Africa: 'a time is coming when it will be a misnomer to speak of "South

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<sup>2</sup> Collyer, The Campaign in South-West Africa, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Garson, 'Smuts and Africa', August 1977, p. 5.

Africa" because the Northern limits of our civilisation will have gone so far.'<sup>5</sup>

Smuts's passionate arguments against the Nationalists and others who opposed the war may have been important in persuading both Parliament and the South African people to participate in the South-West African campaign and the war at large.<sup>6</sup> Realistically, the Union probably would have joined anyway,<sup>7</sup> but Smuts's influence cannot be discounted.

For most of the campaign, Smuts was given the task of 'administrative and military organisation at the seat of government in Pretoria'.<sup>8</sup> All general orders were issued under his name.<sup>9</sup> However, both in this role and during his one-month stint as commander of the South and Central forces, his involvement was generally unremarkable - he was a capable General but his task could have been done by others.

Smuts's influence on policy during the war and at the surrender were very important in transforming the future of the territory. He advised Botha not to use natives in the campaign and appointed Gorges as Chief Civil Secretary and Beves as Military Governor but subsumed their positions directly under his control.<sup>10</sup> Both were of British extraction and could be counted on to remain loyal. By placing them under his direct orders, Smuts was able to begin his transformation of the territory.

Even more significant was Smuts's involvement in the surrender terms. Botha was willing to accept the terms offered by Seitz, but Smuts objected to the second term, which allowed the German active troops to

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<sup>5</sup> Smuts, JC, *War Time Speeches*, p. 90-91.

<sup>6</sup> Smuts argued in parliament on 10 September, 1914, representing the Government's position and directly responding to Hertzog. *Parliamentary Papers*, fifth session, 10 September, cols. 83-89.

<sup>7</sup> The parliamentary vote on joining the war was an overwhelming 92 for to 12 against.

<sup>8</sup> Hofmeyr, *Smuts*, v1/p. 385.

<sup>9</sup> See *Union Defence Forces 'General Orders' for 1914-1915*, nos. 1-64.

<sup>10</sup> *Minister of Defense, Proclamation of 11 July, 1915.*

retain their rifles and artillery.<sup>11</sup> Smuts wanted no possible opponents to his planned expansion.

In fighting for recognition of South African sovereignty over South-West Africa, Smuts was a more central figure than he was during the 1915 campaign. As South Africa's representative to the Paris Peace Conference, first with Botha and later as the head of the delegation, Smuts fought to attain the annexation of South-West Africa. William Louis continues Swanson's arguments that Smuts's main concerns were security for the Union and the protection of the non-white population. Certainly he argued publicly that the Germans there threatened both Union and British security and that the Germans had abused the indigenous peoples of the territory, and assuredly security was a concern. Smuts's true designs on the territory, however, were revealed in his personal correspondence. Smuts knew that he wanted expansion into the territory and that his and Louis Botha's political positions would be unsteady without some gain being perceived by the South African people. The expansion theme runs throughout his letters and speeches,<sup>12</sup> much more so than security or the welfare of the indigenous people.

The acquisition of annexation rights was Smuts's task, and Smuts's alone. The Mandate would probably never have come about without his involvement. Smuts at first demanded annexation, and his work with the British had gained allies such as Lloyd George, who agreed that 'German Southwest (sic) Africa could not be separated from the South African Union.'<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> SP LXII/95, July 1915.

<sup>12</sup> See especially Smuts Papers v101/99-100

<sup>13</sup> Lloyd George, Memoirs, I, 114-1115.

Smuts, however, saw from Wilson's opposition to annexations that there was a need to compromise. Smuts was personally opposed to annexation of Austrian and Turkish lands in Europe and the Middle East and had developed the idea of the Mandate to cope with the administration of these territories. When Wilson included German colonies, Smuts at first fought against this. Realizing he was outgunned, he fought for the best terms which would be 'annexation in all but name.'<sup>14</sup>

Smuts wrote the drafts of many of the documents which shaped the Mandates, including Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant.<sup>15</sup> He made the syntax of these documents fit his goals. 'Allied and Associated Powers' replaced 'League of Nations', limiting the League's future claims on regulating the mandates. The protections extended to the indigenous people were all protections of which Smuts approved. And Smuts divided the mandates into three classes and wrote the draft for the Class 'C' Mandates, in which he included the vital phrase which was written in the Mandate for South West Africa as:

The Mandatory shall have full power of administration and legislation over the territory.. as an integral portion of the Union of South Africa, and may apply the laws of the Union of South Africa to the territory....<sup>16</sup>

No South African could have won outright annexation of South-West Africa. But Smuts had won something so akin to annexation that he successfully defended his 'annexation in all but name' before challenges from the League of Nations between 1919 and 1924, and the British did not

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<sup>14</sup> SP 21/5, 20 March, 1918.

<sup>15</sup> British Delegation, 'Draft Resolution in Reference to Mandatories', January 28, 1919.

<sup>16</sup> League of Nations, 'The Mandate for South-West Africa,' 17 December, 1920. See also the draft, SP LIV/1074, 28 June, 1918.

challenge the Union's claims that the Mandate was their business, even though it was issued in the name of 'His Britannic Majesty'. Cooper argues that this was because they were unwilling to commit the resources necessary to administer the territory,<sup>17</sup> but the South Africans under Smuts in fact took the initiative to claim it, using court cases and legislation to enforce their claim. Smuts, for example, issued legal papers arguing that the King, as head of state of one of the Great Powers, had tacitly extended control of the region to the Union by conferring the mandate to 'The Union of South Africa.'<sup>18</sup>

The League of Nations also exercised some control due to Article 7, which required their consent for any modification of the mandate, and also stated that any dispute over the Mandate should be turned over to them. Smuts once again personally involved himself in diminishing the League's power, using court cases such as *Rex v. Christiaan*, extending laws, and arguing that the Mandate had been extended by the Principle Allied and Associated Powers, and that the League therefore had only limited jurisdiction (he had personally seen to that). Another leader, less inclined to expansionism, would not have as rigorously pursued the case. Smuts, however, had developed a grand plan for South-West Africa and in order to carry out its internal workings, he had to assure himself of its immunity to outside interference. His interactions with the League and the Commonwealth were meant to ensure this.

As Prime Minister, it was Smuts's his responsibility to gain support within South-West Africa for the Union's eventual annexation of the protectoratem and he therefore tried to draw the Mandate as close as

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<sup>17</sup> Cooper, *The Occupation of Namibia*, p. 116.

<sup>18</sup> GG 4/195, 15 November, 1919.

possible to the Union. He ended Martial Law in the territory in 1919, and immediately began to subordinate the territory to South Africa. The Administration extended Cape, Transvaal, and Union laws to South-West Africa by decree, regularizing economic, racial, and land laws. The territory's finances were regulated by the Union Treasury and its transportation by the Union Railways and Harbours. Union businesses were encouraged to expand into South-West Africa.

Smuts neither proposed nor carried out all these changes alone. His position was to decide policy, in consultation with others such as his Administrator, and generally leave the implementation to them. However, the Administration was placed directly under the Prime Minister's department, which is significant.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Smuts made the officials in South-West Africa responsible to the relevant Departments of State in the Union, rather than creating a separate Protectorate Service.

In administering the Mandate, Smuts was again a policy maker. As illustrated by his September 1920 speech in Windhoek,<sup>20</sup> Smuts developed a blueprint for the future of the Mandated territory. His goal, since outright annexation had been rejected by the League of Nations in 1919, was the eventual incorporation of the territory into the Union by different means.

Smuts evidently still hoped that annexation could occur in the future. He realized that there were three distinct segments of the population in the Mandate and that for annexation to occur, certain

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<sup>19</sup> GG 62/2250, Smuts response to Japanese enquiries, 31 October, 1921.

<sup>20</sup> ADM 427/18, 16 September 1920.

problems would have to be resolved regarding each. The Germans would have to accept British naturalization and become participating, and hopefully enthusiastic, citizens of the Union. South African settlers would need to move in to provide business and infrastructure, and also to satisfy the Union population that annexation was in their favour. The position of the indigenous people would have to be equated with that of the blacks and coloureds in the Union, while the image of the Union as a protector of their rights was preserved, without causing coloured or indigenous groups to rebel.

Smuts had his hands full as Prime Minister of the Union and could not always be personally involved in the affairs of the Mandate. The Administrator - whether Gorges or Hofmeyr - was responsible for carrying out policy and for creating some of it. Historians argue that much of the policy in South-West Africa was carried out by the Administration. Lewis, for example, declares that Smuts was not well-informed during the Bondelswartz affair (Chapter 10). Smuts, however, was in constant contact with Hofmeyr directly before the Bondelswartz affair. In addition, his pledge to the white population that he would create a labour force out of the non-whites for their benefit was indirectly responsible for the uprising through the dog tax, and his commitment to Union settlers contributed to the transfer of indigenous lands, including some Bondelswart land, to whites.

In addition, Smuts sometimes stepped in and decided policy against the advice of the Administrator, the Governor-General of the Union, and others, such as his decision to offer subsidies to German schools directly preceding the London Conference.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See PM 21/26, 19 October, 1923, GG 4/246, 19 October 1923.

Smuts, it appears, stepped in when his blueprint for the integration of South-West Africa into his white superstate was threatened - whether to placate the Germans in the interest of gaining their alliance, change land policy to aid Union settlers, or, more rarely, to keep the non-European population in the position he had dictated for them.

It would be incorrect to ignore Smuts's influence in the field of 'native affairs'. His policy was to rigorously enforce certain of the Union's pledges, such as not allowing these groups access to firearms or alcohol, and not raising black armies. He had always supported these policies in the Union. Another aspect of his policy was to extend the Union's pass laws, taxes, the idea of reserves (which had been used by the Germans as well), and other South African programs to the territory.

In regard to his dealings with the German population, however, Smuts was very influential. Through personal leadership, Smuts developed a situation which was unique among the mandated territories, probably unthinkable to other South African leaders, and which was designed to reach the objective of a Union-led white territory in South-West Africa which could become a part of the 'Monroe Doctrine for the South.'<sup>22</sup>

Smuts and Botha's policy of repatriations, unlike that of the other Mandatory powers, was to expel the 'undesirables' - military and police personnel, the poor, and the voluntary exiles who were anti-Union; the other Germans were allowed to remain. When Smuts became Prime Minister, he was quick to remind the Germans of the magnanimity of the decision.

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<sup>22</sup> Speech to the Royal Geographical Society, January 28, 1918, in Smuts, War Time Speeches, pp. 71-84.

The decision was not so magnanimous, and Smuts showed his need for the Germans as allies in South-West Africa several times during this period. He trod a line between friendship and force. He wanted the Germans to become willing partners in his expanded Union, but only if they would be loyal to the Union. Therefore, he attempted a series of compromises with the Germans in South-West Africa and the German government in an attempt to gain this desirable situation.

Smuts's personal involvement culminated in the London Agreement of 1923. He personally decided on the Union's concessions - most of which were superficial, a few of which were not. Smuts represented the Union at the negotiations, and the agreement was duly sealed. The major concession gained was that the Germans, if they desired, could become Union citizens.<sup>23</sup> However much he wanted *willing* citizens, Smuts chose the path of naturalizing all the Germans except those who objected, instead of naturalizing only the members of the German population who specifically asked for it. In his quest for hegemony over southern Africa, Smuts believed that naturalizing as many Germans as possible would create a pool of good white citizens in the territory.

Smuts was involved with the League of Nations over this process, for it was the Union government, and not the South-West African administration, which was aiming for the naturalization. His personal contact with Marquis Theodoli and others<sup>24</sup> underlines his arguments first to be allowed to naturalize the Germans and later to use their involvement to push for an annexation vote - which never materialized.

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<sup>23</sup> SWAA 1315/1-5, on the London Agreement, 23 October, 1923.

<sup>24</sup> USC 801.4, Despatch 566 of 23, 16 April 1923.

Between 1919 and 1924 it was Smuts who dictated much of the Union's policy towards the German inhabitants of the Mandate. However, he did not lay all his hopes of annexation on them. Throughout this period, the Union was encouraging settlement by its citizens in the Mandated territory, and Smuts was sometimes very involved in this policy.

Smuts had even more compassion for the settlers than for the German population. Central to his support for the Union settlers was his shared background with Afrikaners and British alike. He had grown up as the son of a dominee amongst rural boers in the Western Cape and had studied in England. He counted among his friends many influential British South Africans - Merriman, Emily Hobhouse, and J.J. Collyer.

Hancock makes much of the role of Smuts's 'Afrikaans heritage'<sup>25</sup> in promoting settlement. It was more Smuts's belief in expansion of the Union which caused him to support the settlers. His settlement policy, which was mostly implemented by the Mandate Administration, made no distinction between Briton and Boer.

The policy was generally to give aid to Union citizens hoping to emigrate to the territory in the form of loans, boring boreholes for water, and the cheap sale of allotments. Once he had decided on a pro-settler policy, Smuts only stepped in during the 1922-23 drought when he encouraged general aid to settlers.<sup>26</sup> It was the rural settlers who received the bulk of his attention; he never seems to have interfered in Hofmeyr's task of attracting business and urban investment.

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<sup>25</sup> Hancock, *Smuts*, v1/p. 385.

<sup>26</sup> SP 27/221.

Smuts's personal involvement in attracting settlers may not be as evident as his commitment to gaining the Germans as allies. It would be false to conclude that he was not as interested in the settlers, however. The German question, fraught with problems, suited itself perfectly to Smuts's skills as an international diplomat, whereas the statistics showed that settlement proceeded apace and when, during the drought, it faltered, Smuts quickly became immersed in the problem.

In conclusion, there were issues and times during the period 1914-1924 when Smuts was deeply involved in the Union's association with South West Africa, and others when he was a more peripheral player. During the 1915 campaign, he was an important member of the team whose contributions were significant, but not necessarily irreplaceable. In dealing with settler policy, indigenous peoples, and the extension of South African trade and law to the Mandated territory, Smuts decided policy and generally let others implement it until there was a problem, when to a lesser or greater degree he became involved. Undoubtedly, his background and beliefs were very important motives for what took place, but Hofmeyr, Gorges, and others also made key contributions.

However, in gaining the mandate over South-West Africa for the Union and in policy towards the Germans, Smuts was the most central, most important contributor, both creating policy and implementing it. Without his contribution, the Mandate, if given at all, would have followed a different path entirely.

Many factors in Smuts's background may be seen to have had an effect on his decisions, but it was his pursuit of the creation of a successful white-led African state, based on South Africa, with hegemony over the region, which encouraged him to push for incorporation by any means -

military conquest, League of Nations accession, white general vote, economic and bureaucratic dependence - which he felt would achieve this goal.

### 1914-1924: SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

Success and failure cannot be divided into neat little sections as easily as the analysis of Smuts's influence on the evolution of the South African presence in South-West Africa. Instead, it is necessary to evaluate how close Smuts was to his goal of undisputed sovereignty over South-West Africa in June 1924, when he was forced to turn the position of Prime Minister over to Barry Hertzog of the Nationalists.

Having failed to win the direct annexation of South-West Africa in 1919, despite the military victory of 1915, Smuts was compelled to pursue a slower course to achieve the goal of integrating the territory into the Union. The Mandate itself was, Smuts declared, annexation in all but name. Certainly he had won for the Union the right to administer the region as an integral portion of itself. But though Smuts argued that the League of Nations "never came into possession of the German Colonies, and can give no Mandate over them",<sup>27</sup> the League had *de facto* power over the Mandate, and could possibly have revoked it, as its heir, the United Nations, would do in 1966. The League was also the guarantor of the rights of the indigenous peoples, and could receive and judge complaints from other nations over the treatment of blacks and coloureds in the Mandate.

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<sup>27</sup> ADM 427/18, 16 September, 1920.

The internal population had diverse feelings over the Mandate as well. The coloured population had generally welcomed the Union's rule in 1919,<sup>28</sup> but the German population was opposed to annexation as well as the Mandate and some members agitated for a return to German rule. The settlers were not yet sufficient in numbers to sway opinion towards the Union.

By 1924 Smuts may have felt he had made his position stronger. The territory was economically tied to the Union, with South African firms investing heavily in it. The number of Union citizens had increased due to settler policies. Smuts had fended off the League's interference in the Bondelswartz Affairs and made it clear that the Union, not the British, was the Mandatory power. More than 90 percent of the Germans had become British citizens, allies in the 'civilizing of the continent'.<sup>29</sup> Revolts by the Bondelswartz and Reheboth Baasters had been successfully repressed. Even the laws of the territory were basically extensions of the Union's legislation.

In many ways, Smuts had been successful in drawing the Mandated territory closer to the Union and the above facts show that assimilation was proceeding, albeit in fits and starts. However, Smuts's mission cannot be considered successful for several reasons.

First, the annexation had not occurred. This fact seems a glaring gauge of Smuts's success. Despite his achievements, he did not succeed in gaining either a vote from the white population in favour of annexation nor the consent of the League of Nations.

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<sup>28</sup> GG 50/800, 2 October 1919.

<sup>29</sup> SWAA 1315/4, Smuts to de Haas, 23 October, 1923.

It can be argued that Smuts did not believe he had reached the point, by 1924, of attempting either of these things. In 1923, he still believed he would serve another term. Certainly, he wrote to his friends the Gilletts 'the indications are that I shall get in,'<sup>30</sup> and he held this belief until the election.

But we cannot evaluate Smuts's success or failure simply by whether or not actual annexation occurred, this analysis is not enough to judge Smuts a failure.

In several ways, Smuts's successes were at least qualified. The number of settlers was by 1924 quite small, despite the pro-settlement legislation of the Administration - there were only 831 new Union settlers who had accepted government-offered allotments.<sup>31</sup> This meant that the majority of whites in South-West Africa were still of German extraction (even adding the 1800 Union citizens who had resided in the territory under German rule and those who had moved in to the territory without taking a government allotment).

The scarcity of Union citizens in the Mandate was a stumbling block towards its assimilation. However, if the naturalization of German citizens, successful in changing their citizenship *de jure*, had forged the German population into a group of loyal, assimilated Union citizens, the low numbers of settlers would have been less important.

Instead, many Germans still hoped for the return of German rule. They complained about the Union's 'leniency' towards the indigenous people<sup>32</sup> as well as towards their own language, education, and social

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<sup>30</sup> SP 27/357 Smuts to M.C. Gillett, 14 June 1923.

<sup>31</sup> UG 21-24, Report of the Administrator for the South-West Africa for the Year 1923, 31 March, 1924.

<sup>32</sup> 'Anarchical Native Conditions', *Landes-Zeitung*, 12 August, 1922.

system. Smuts did South-West Africans of German descent a disservice by not consulting them prior to the London Agreement, and many felt that their needs were not being met.<sup>33</sup> To a certain extent, their acceptance of naturalization was an acceptance of the inevitability of Union domination of the territory, but this was a shaky base on which to build loyalty.

The indigenous population's unhappiness with Union rule was much less unambivalent. They had been disillusioned by poverty, poor treatment, the continuation of hated German laws and the introduction of Union taxes and pass laws, as well as an administration which promoted pro-white policies at their expense. The Bondelswartz Rebellion was symptomatic of the Union's treatments of the black and coloured populations. Although the League of Nations had expressed only 'regret'<sup>34</sup> over the action officially, some world leaders such as Marquis Theodoli questioned the Union's handling of the affair and the Mandate in general, and opposition to annexation was forming.

By 1924 Smuts and his administration had created a deep but fragile link between South-West Africa and the Union. His policies, influenced by his background and belief, were not failures because he had created an economic and legal connection between the Union and South-West Africa and warded off international attacks on the Union's sovereignty as Mandatory power. However, the Union was forced to remain the Mandatory power, and not to incorporate the territory, because Smuts had failed to encourage a large number of Union citizens into the territory, had been only moderately successful in winning the loyalty of the German

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<sup>33</sup> PEN 264, 17 March, 1937, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Cockram, South-West African Mandate, p. 160.

population, and had alienated the largest group of South-West Africans - the indigenous population.

Smuts's gains towards his objective were undercut by the problems his administration either created or failed to solve. His superstate never materialized. The 1924 political defeat, the end of an era, ushered his dreams out with him - neither Mocambique nor the High Commission Territories of Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland were ever incorporated into the Union. Only in South-West Africa could he claim some headway, and even there his success was limited.

#### POSTSCRIPT 1924-1950

Smuts's relationship with the territory and people which would become known as Namibia was not over, but between 1924 and 1939, first in opposition and later in the fusion government with his old opponent Hertzog, Smuts had only limited power.

In 1939, twenty years after he had first become Prime Minister Smuts once again took office on the invitation of the Governor-General following Hertzog's resignation.<sup>35</sup> He would hold power until 1948, when the resurgent Nationalist party would once again defeat him. Two years later, he passed away peacefully in his beloved Cape.

During his nine years as Prime Minister 1939-1948, old problems regarding South-West Africa resurfaced. Particular amongst Smuts's antagonists were a revitalized, nationalist German population and the League of Nations' successor.

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<sup>35</sup> Hancock, Smuts, v2/p. 323.

Smuts's failure to instill loyalty to the Union in the German population came back to haunt him in the early 1930s. As Germany recovered her pride and instituted an extreme nationalist government, she began to agitate for the return of her colonies. In 1926 a German official concluded that 'to withhold colonies from Germany would be a declaration of war against her national aspirations.'<sup>36</sup>

As Hitler and other German leaders began to agitate for the return of their colonies, the SWA German population began to react. Their National-Socialist Labour Party and the Deutsche Bund began to agitate for dual citizenship and to fly the Nazi flag. Tensions mounted between the Union population and the German population. Luckily, by 1929 Smuts's immigration policy was finally seeing fruit, and the Union settlers made up a majority of the population.<sup>37</sup> Here is evidence of the eventual success of the settler policy, at least in creating a loyal white population.

The period of world appeasement towards Hitler, between 1933 and 1939, made Hertzog, Smuts, and the other leaders of the fusion government nervous over the possibility of Germany reclaiming South-West Africa. Lloyd George agreed, for the sake of peace, that the British Empire would reconsider the mandates.<sup>38</sup>

South-West Africa became sharply divided, with the Union population clamoring for incorporation and the Germans<sup>39</sup> agitating for a return to German rule. As Minister of Justice, Smuts took a hard line towards the Germans. While they had been potential allies, he had been willing to make concessions. But he could not abide foreign colonialism

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<sup>36</sup> Schnee, D., German Colonization, quoted in Cockram, South West African Mandate, p. 173.

<sup>37</sup> Cockram, South West African Mandate, p. 175.

<sup>38</sup> Lloyd George, Memoirs, p. 237.

<sup>39</sup> The German's automatic naturalization as Union citizens was to be revoked by Union Parliamentary Act 35 of 1942

in an area he perceived as the Union's backyard. In early 1939, he sent 3000 South African Police to the territory, something he had refrained from doing even during the Bondelswartz Rebellion. By the time Smuts came to power in 1939, Poland had been invaded, the appeasement policy dropped, and talk of returning Germany's colonies had obviously been abandoned.

The post-war problems were not as successfully resolved. Although Smuts's settlers began to outnumber the Germans in 1929, they could never hope to outnumber the indigenous peoples. The end of World War II brought an era of decolonization. The colonial powers were forced to lend a certain amount of recognition of indigenous people's rights, and South Africa's mandate in South-West Africa inevitably came under fire for its treatment of the indigenous population.

The United Nations, the League's successor created at the end of World War II, almost immediately began to deal with the problem of the Mandates. Smuts recognized that the Mandate system had to change.

My opinion is that the best solution will be to get rid of the mandatory system and to attend to the matter in a different way, even though we have to send a report to another organization.<sup>40</sup>

The majority of the Mandatory powers agreed to a Trusteeship agreement, which would lessen their powers to the benefit of the United Nations and the indigenous peoples. Smuts, however, decided that it was time to press for annexation.

The Union government presented a memorandum on 17 October 1946, stating its case.<sup>41</sup> The main argument was that the inhabitants had

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<sup>40</sup> Parliamentary Papers, 1945, 20 March, col.3752.

<sup>41</sup> quoted in Goldblatt, I, The Mandated territory of SWA, p. 21-22.

voted for incorporation, and the government claimed 208,850 non-Europeans supported the move, with only 33,520 opposing it. Smuts once again used the argument that it was in the natives' interest. He also argued that the area was an extension of the Union, both in population and in geography. These arguments were almost exactly the same as the ones he had used in 1919.

Smuts's failure to gain annexation in 1919 was repeated even more vehemently in 1946. Not only did the Fourth (Trusteeship) Committee reject incorporation, it also recommended that the Mandate be withdrawn and the territory be placed under International Trusteeship, citing the fact that the

African inhabitants have not yet... reached a state in their political development enabling them to express a considered opinion which the Assembly could recognize on such an important question as the incorporation of their territory.<sup>42</sup>

Smuts was defeated. His final attempt at annexation, couched in terms of 'native welfare' and 'logical union,' but really a cover for expansion, was defeated as his first attempt had been almost 30 years previously. When, in 1948, Smuts left office, the Union was still governing the territory as if it were a Mandate, but the United Nations was pressing for a trusteeship agreement.<sup>43</sup>

Having lost the General Election in 1948, Smuts's long relationship with South-West Africa was over. In 1915, he and Louis Botha had invaded South-West Africa, partly to help the British, but equally to gain dominion over the territory. Thirty years later, Smuts, alone, had failed to

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<sup>42</sup> adopted by the United Nations, General Committee, 14 December, 1946.

<sup>43</sup> on the 1 November, 1947, the General Assembly adopted a resolution urging the Union to submit a trusteeship document.

achieve dominion over the territory. The South Africans would hang on to the territory using military power, rather unsuccessful diplomacy, and the goodwill of most of the white population, until 1990, but Smuts's failure to incorporate South-West Africa into the Union in 1919, and again by 1924, paved the way for the eventual independence of Namibia in 1990.

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