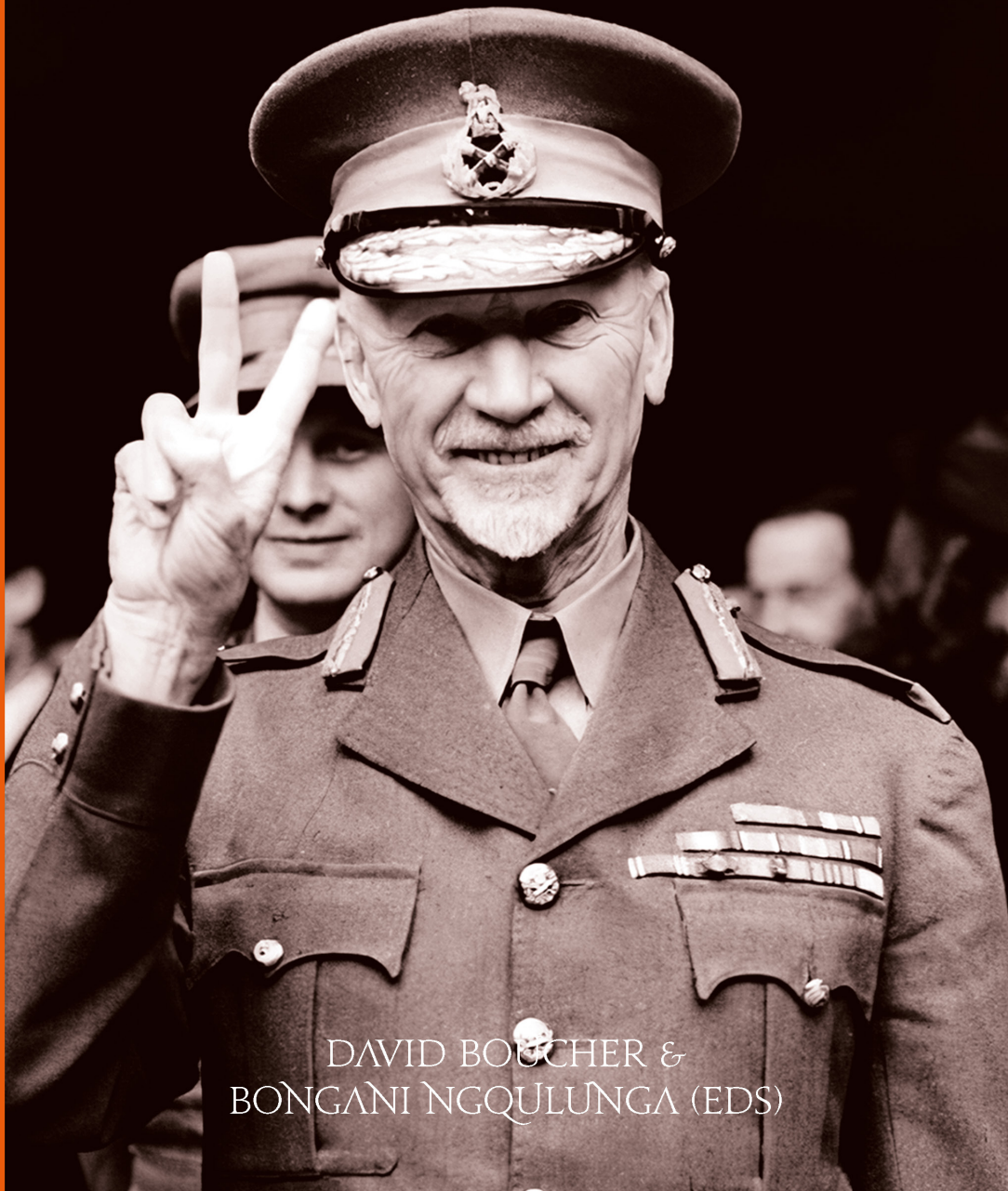
REAPPRAISING THE LIFE & LEGACY OF JAN C SMUTS



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Reappraising the Life and Legacy of Jan C. Smuts

David Boucher and Bongani Ngqulunga (Ed)

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in South Africa: Critical Voices from the Past (2021, Johannesburg: Wits University), *Reframing Africa? Reflections on Modernity and the Moving Image* (2022, Cape Town: African Minds), *Political Economy of Contemporary African Popular Culture: Selected Case Studies* (2024, Pennsylvania: Lexington books) and *À l'œuvre au cinéma! Professionnelles en Afrique et au Moyen Orient* (2022, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2022).

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Series Foreword

Victoria Graham
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Co-Series Editor: African Political Science and International Relations in Focus

In the annals of history, certain figures emerge whose legacies continue to provoke thought, incite debate, and inspire reflection long after their time. Jan Christiaan Smuts is one such figure. His life and influence, a mix of paradoxes and achievements, weaves through the landscape of the 20th century, spanning continents and ideologies and intersecting with pivotal events and movements that have shaped the world as we know it.

The editors of the African Political Science and International Relations in Focus book series, published by UJ Press, are pleased to present *Reappraising the Life and Legacy of Jan C. Smuts*, a book that delves deeply into the complexities and contradictions of Jan Smuts's life, presenting a nuanced portrait through a collection of insightful contributions.

In the book's first chapter, Anna-Marie Jansen van Vuuren and Alexander Holt examine the portrayal of Smuts in contemporary media, challenging prevailing historical narratives and exploring the moral dilemmas faced during the South African Wars. Next, Jonathan Hyslop's 'Jan Smuts and the World Counter-Revolution 1917-1923' captures the global dimensions of Smuts's political career, detailing his efforts against revolutionary movements and his influence on international policy during a period of intense ideological conflict. David Boucher's 'The Making of a Myth: Smuts and the South Wales Miners' explores the intersection of Smuts's mythic status and labour politics, revealing how his image was crafted and contested in diverse contexts far from South Africa.

Bhaso Ndzendze's chapter, 'First Ministers: Jan Smuts and Cabinet Government in the Early Union of South Africa',

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investigates the administrative strategies employed by Smuts and Botha, shedding light on the dual roles they played in shaping the nascent Union of South Africa. In 'Discovering General Smuts through the lens of the First World War in Africa', David Katz provides a detailed account of Smuts's military leadership, particularly during the campaigns in East Africa, illustrating his strategic acumen and the complexities of colonial warfare.

Christopher Allsobrook and Camilla Boisen's 'Illusions of Sovereignty with Postcolonial Governmentality: Jan Smuts, Trusteeship, and the League of Nations' delves into Smuts's role in international diplomacy and his vision for global governance, particularly through the concept of trusteeship and its implications for postcolonial sovereignty. Following this, Saul Dubow explores the question, Was Smuts a racialist? and in 'Smuts and the Politics of Segregation: The prosecution of pass laws under the United Party government, Gary Baines scrutinises Smuts's domestic policies, particularly his approach to racial segregation and its impact on urban South Africa during his tenure.

In Bongani Ngqulunga's 'Jan Smuts, Alfred Xuma, and the Struggle for Racial Equality in South Africa, 1939-1948', the tensions between Smuts and African National Congress leader, Alfred Xuma, are highlighted, providing a critical examination of Smuts's stance on racial equality and the dynamics of resistance. Roger Southall's 'Smuts: Afraid of Greatness' offers a psychological and political analysis of Smuts, questioning his motivations and the contradictions within his pursuit of greatness.

The philosophical underpinnings of Smuts's theory of holism are explored in William Sweet's contribution, which examines the implications of this concept for his political thought and broader intellectual legacy. Smuts's theory of holism provides a foundation for a political philosophy rooted in the idealist tradition.

In Kobus Du Pisani's chapter, 'Father of holism: The intellectual legacy of Jan Smuts', he further elaborates on

Smuts's holistic philosophy, tracing its development and impact on various fields of study. This chapter delves into Smuts as an intellectual, considering that he did not obtain additional formal qualifications but continued to be a lifelong learner through his reading and engagement with scholars. He stayed informed about scientific developments and actively engaged in the academic discussions of his era.

Jo-Ansie van Wyk's chapter on 'Jan Smuts and the Atomic Bomb' provides a fascinating glimpse into an understudied area: Smuts's involvement in global scientific and military developments, particularly his position on nuclear weapons in the post-World War II era. The chapter highlights Smuts's involvement at the beginning of the atomic age, his contributions to the advancement of nuclear science in South Africa, and his publicly stated stance on nuclear non-proliferation.

Reappraising the Life and Legacy of Jan C. Smuts explores both well-known and lesser-known themes on Smuts the man, politician and diplomat, offering a comprehensive and critical examination of Jan Smuts, revealing the intricate interplay between his local and global impact, his military and political strategies, and his philosophical and ethical beliefs. Through a spirit of reflection and inquiry, this volume invites readers to reconsider the grand narratives surrounding Smuts, encouraging a deeper understanding of his complex legacy and its enduring relevance in contemporary discourse, and helping us to better understand one of the most compelling figures of the 20th century.

Introduction

The Enigmatic Smuts

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In recent decades, Smuts's life, thought and career have been extensively explored (e.g., Garcia & van der Waag, 2023; Joubert, 2023; Katz, 2022; Gravett, 2022; du Pisani, 2019; Baxter, 2017; Thakur, 2017; Steyn, 2015; Steyn, 2017; Lentin, 2010; Geyser, 2001; Trew, 1999). Despite the renewed attention, he remains an enigmatic character, whose many apparent contradictions are examined systematically, and often glossed over, as typical of a man of his times, which are said to be mitigating factors in any assessment of his long and often turbulent career, especially in domestic politics. This collection of essays has emerged out of the very first conference devoted to the life and legacy of Jan Christiaan Smuts, held at the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study, University of Johannesburg, July 2023, of which Bongani Ngqulunga, one of the editors, is the former Director. The book attempts to consider Smuts in a broad frame of reference in order to offer reconsiderations and reappraisals, of a man who was much celebrated and much maligned.

Smuts allows us a great deal of margin for interpretation because of his many apparent contradictions, which in his own mind, at least, he either ignored, or was able to reconcile.

He prided himself on being a devoted family man who delighted in the company of his children and grandchildren, yet he locked himself away for in his study for hours when he was at home, making it clear that he did not want to be

disturbed, even by house guests who had been invited to stay. He was often absent from home, sometimes for years on end, in the service of the state, or of humanity. He saw this as his duty above and beyond his obligations to family. His long-suffering wife, Sybella Margaretha Krige, known as Isie, whom he met at Victoria College, Stellenbosch as a fellow student, even when they were courting, had to become accustomed to long periods of separation (Grimbeck, 2010). On graduation in 1891 he went to Cambridge University, courtesy of the Ebden scholarship, to study law for four years. C.F.G. Masterman, later a famous Liberal cabinet minister and social historian, knew him at Cambridge, and described him as 'a bit of a racist!'[1] A reputation that was difficult to acquire in those days when Imperialism, and white race supremacy were considered the norm. Smuts was at this time enamoured with Cecil Rhodes and was an admirer of Paul Kruger, president of the Transvaal Republic.

Shortly after they - Smuts and Isie - were married, Smuts became deeply embroiled in the politics of the Transvaal, and the tragedy of the Second Anglo Boer War (1899 to 1902). In June 1900, Smuts, having no previous military experience, left his wife and child Kosie, to lead a band of Boer commandos on a campaign of guerilla warfare. In August, having lost two children previously, a third, Kosie, died. With Smuts out of communication, Isie had to endure the unbearable loss alone. Because of the British strategy of slash and burn, in order to isolate the Boer fighters from their support networks, Isie was ordered to relocate to British-held Pietermaritzburg, to stay with her sister. Frequent absences of varying durations were to remain the pattern of the rest of their married lives.

1 This observation was conveyed to David Boucher by Neville Charles Masterman, who lived to the age of 106 years, a historian of note and the son of C.F.G. Masterman. Masterman, in collaboration with David Lloyd George, under whom Smuts served in England, is famous for introducing part one of the National Insurance Act into Britain in 1911, which dealt with healthcare.

A life-long champion of freedom, human rights and self-determination, it was evident in his attitudes and native policies in South Africa that, while he preached universal principles, the enjoyment of them was qualified (Boucher, 2009). His Rectoral address at St Andrews, for example, delivered at the end of his tenure in 1934, was entitled *Freedom*, in which he warned that the gains in individual rights, foundational for world order, such as personal freedom, independence of mind, and participation in government, which seemed essential to him for 'all true progress' (Smuts, 1934:26), were threatened by World War I and its aftermath. There had been a decay in individual responsibility, and participation in government detrimental to the advance of humankind. He was here echoing familiar themes warning of the rise of the masses, and the subjugation of the individual will to the collective. With reference to European civilisation, Smuts was a Liberal in the continental sense, by which we mean, not classical laissez-faire Liberalism, but the social Liberalism advocated by T.H. Green, J.A. Hobson, and L.T. Hobhouse (1919), the latter two with whom Smuts was on close terms. European Liberalism was particularly exemplified by Guido de Ruggiero's, *European Liberalism* (1927); Miguel de Unamuno's *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and in Peoples* (1921); and José Ortego y Gasset's, *The Revolt of the Masses* (1996). Ortega y Gasset, for example, was representative of Smuts's faith in Liberalism, when in 1930 he argued that there was a greater vitality in Liberalism than anti-Liberalism, and it had proved itself victorious time and time again. There was no doubt that the rise of the masses constituted a danger, and without minimising the immensity of the task, Ortega y Gasset believed that Liberalism would triumph (1996:104, cf. 94-96). In relation to achieving the ideal of a permanent peace, for example, Smuts was equally as optimistic, contending that the 'stars will fight for it in their courses. The universal forces that make human history and control human destiny will help it forward year by year. . . . In the end all will be well' (Smuts, 1930a:20).

Smuts is often accused of being a hypocrite because of his championing of 'universal' European values, such as human rights, when denying those very same rights to black people and other races. Christof Heyns and Willem Gavett attempt to explain Smuts's apparent contradiction between human rights and segregation by suggesting that it meant for him basic needs, such as food security, safety, freedom of expression and freedom of conscience. They suggest that Smuts did not think that human rights were synonymous with political or racial equality (cited in Steyn, 2015:230; also see Gravett, 2022:349-355). Such an explanation is implausible given the context of Smuts's pronouncements.

As with most Liberals, he saw no contradiction between the right kind of Imperialism and European values. Even L.T. Hobhouse and J.A. Hobson, severe critics of Imperialism, and friends of Smuts, approved of white settler Imperialism, or 'sane Imperialism', motivated by the civilising mission. L.T. Hobhouse, for example, was critical only of a certain type of Imperialism, namely 'aggressive' or 'insane' Imperialism, but strongly approved of 'sane' Imperialism. Hobhouse maintained: 'If Imperialism means a high sense of the honour of the Empire and of its duties to subject races, then we cannot have too much Imperialism' (1899:215). He objected to the disingenuous espousal of such high ideals and conceded that the evidence suggests that it is the destiny of the 'dying nations' to be absorbed by the Great Powers. It was imperative, Hobhouse argued, 'that the absorption of a barbaric world should not corrupt civilization' (1899:219).

Hobson equated 'insane Imperialism' with the ruthless exploitation by white colonists of the 'lower races', who were treated, not as ends in themselves, but as tools to exploit for the benefit of the white people (Hobson, 1988:11, 55, 65, 200, 246). In Hobson's view it was the use of Imperialism by financial capitalists, not to extend 'Imperial control' but to manipulate Imperial powers and personnel for furthering and protecting their own business schemes (Hobson, 1900). Such an attitude, Hobson believed, incorporated 'race-lust', which embraced the doctrine of the right to 'British paramountcy'

(Hobson, 1900:16). L.T. Hobhouse concurred that the 'new Imperialism' was 'a hard assertion of racial supremacy and material force' (Hobhouse, 1973:45).

For de Ruggiero, as it was for all social Liberals, including Smuts, freedom was an achievement. The principles are gradually acquired through the self-conscious possession, or development, of personality by the exercise of discipline and the deliberate cultivation of progress in moral action. The Liberal state has to facilitate the individual's self-discipline to attain moral progress, and reject the opposite extremes of, for example, forcing individuals to adopt and conform to projects for which they are ill-prepared, or of leaving that person alone, 'depriving him of that aid to progress which a political system, wisely designed and wisely administered can give' (de Ruggiero, 1927:ix).

Smuts, however equivocal he may have been at times, fully bought into the idea of the civilising mission of Europe. In 1895, in a speech at Kimberley, defending the policies of Rhodes, Smuts unequivocally subscribed to the idea of the duty of the white races to civilise the black 'barbarians'. He contended, 'I for one consider the position of the white race in South Africa one of the gravest responsibility and difficulty. They must be the guardians of their own safety and development, and at the same time they are the trustees for the coloured races. . . . The great conservative policy of South Africa embraced by the Bond-Rhodes alliance has for its object the stimulation of those forces which make for progress and the granting of rights in proportion as duties are learned' (cited in Joseph, 1970:41-2). Smuts's belief in the civilising mission of European involvement in the African continent and other places in what is often referred to as the Global South is a curious one. During his first premiership, he believed that black people had to develop along their own lines. In pursuit of this goal, he implemented a policy of territorial and institutional segregation. At that time, he thought Cecil Rhodes's belief in the limited extension of political rights to non-white people who qualified, was mistaken.

In 1938, his general outlook was much the same. Placing responsibility on the native peoples for taking advantage of civilisation, as Kruger had done in his inauguration address of 1888 (cited by Schowalter, the German editor, Kruger, 1902:41, fn 1), Smuts told the graduating students at Fort Hare, amongst whom was G.A. Mbeki, the father of Thabo Mbeki, that 'Europeans have come here as bearers of the higher culture.... [a] missionary race' (Smuts, 1938:16). The salvation of native peoples, however, would ultimately be in their own hands. In 1939, Smuts again emphasised the superiority of European civilisation. Mandela, hearing Smuts speak at Fort Hare in 1939, described the experience as exhilarating. Mandela maintained that he 'cared more that [Smuts] had helped to found the League of Nations, promoting freedom around the world, than the fact that he had repressed freedom at home' (Mandela, 1994:46).

In echoing the view, often articulated since at least the conquest of the Americas, which described native peoples as child-like, Smuts invoked the assumptions of a worldview that justified withholding rights until indigenous peoples were mentally mature enough to exercise them responsibly. Smuts believed that black peoples were 'a child-like type with a happy go-lucky disposition, but with no incentive to improvement' (cited in Cameron, 1994:115). He accepted, to a large extent, the stadial view of civilisations which placed them on a scale of development from savagery to barbarism and civilisation. Progress takes time and follows a process 'from domination, to understanding, consent and cooperation' (Smuts, 1934).

He was not deluded, Smuts told the graduates at Fort Hare, 'that there would be great problems in the forward march from the semi-barbarism of the past to a cultured future' (Smuts, 1938:19). He may have been disingenuous in articulating this view. The debate over the 1936 Hertzog's Native Bills was fundamentally over the question of what to do with educated Africans. Jan Hofmeyr's view was that the franchise should be maintained for educated Africans in the Cape (and possibly be extended to other similarly educated

Africans in other provinces). Smuts chose to side with Hertzog in removing enfranchised Cape Africans from the common roll.

In all that Smuts wrote on 'native' problems there is an ambiguity between polygenesis, and monogenesis theories of human origins. Polygenesis posits different origins for different races and was subscribed to in the eighteenth century by such notable philosophers as Voltaire and Hume, but it was also evident in much of the nineteenth century anthropology. The main thrust of its doctrine is that inequalities between the races are congenital, and that education and culture could make very little difference. Monogenesis is the belief that all humans have descended from the same source, and is central to the Abrahamic religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Smuts's 1895 speech at Kimberley, and his views during the mid-1920s, for example, appear to subscribe to polygenesis, the splitting and separate development of human evolution. It is fair to say, however, that Smuts's views on race evolved over time. While his 1895 speech was essentially a racist point of view in the sense of a belief in the congenital difference of races, essentially in sympathy with Kruger. You could say Smuts's 1929 Rhodes Memorial Lectures also subscribed to this view. (Smuts, 1930b). His perspective shifted over time and took a more cultural relativist tone.

Hence, differences in abilities and attainments amongst peoples, are explicable with reference to progression in relation to environment and culture. Education and a conducive social environment are contributory factors in the civilising process, and the higher civilisations have a duty to assist the lower in this process. The relationship between black and white was one of trusteeship, or guardian and ward, which Smuts believed Rhodes had promoted repeatedly (Kiernan, 1943:160).

In practice, Smuts was pragmatic, even disingenuous, preferring to defer the native problem, especially enfranchisement, for future governments. Education and healthcare, Smuts believed, were the key to assist native peoples in attaining the higher levels of their own civilisations,

parallel with, but separate from Europeans. He believed that South Africa had achieved more, for example, than any British protectorate, in advancing native education. Already, fair progress had been made, but he acknowledged that there was a great deal more to be done. Health, however, had been somewhat neglected because of the emphasis on education. Smuts contended that 'one of the heaviest tasks that lies immediately ahead of us as a civilised Government is to tackle this question of Native health and make much better provision for it' (Smuts, 1938:19). Given the audience he was addressing and how he resisted the more progressive views on race of his protégé, Jan Hofmeyr, and earlier of John X Merriman, we have to question the sincerity of Smuts's explanation.

Smuts was immensely practical, and even acquisitive in the amount of land he purchased as investments, while at the same time intensely cerebral. Internationally, his practical achievements are well attested, having served the interests of Great Britain and her Allies with distinction in both World Wars; keeping South Africa at the centre of discussions about the role of small nations within the Empire, and the three institutions he contributed so much to founding, the Commonwealth of Nations; the League of Nations; and the United Nations. As a soldier, he played his part in the Second Anglo Boer War, as well as in campaigns in East and West Africa during World War I. He played a significant role in British politics, appointed by David Lloyd George as the seventh member of the Imperial War Cabinet; establishing the Royal Air Force in Great Britain; acting as an arbiter of disputes around the country; as well as making a small contribution to the solution of the Irish problem in 1921, by exercising some influence on Eamonn De Valera, and Michael Collins. Smuts was not, however, satisfied with the outcome, which proved to be prescient of the on-going troubles.

Through his association with Professor Chaim Weizmann, a Russian Jew, who at Manchester University, developed a streamlined method for producing acetone, essential for the production of explosives, Smuts acted from a long-time empathy with the Jewish people, viewing South

Africa as a fellow-oppressed nation. On more mercenary grounds he believed there to be the pressing need to win over wealthy American Jews to the Allied cause, by showing a commitment to the creation of a homeland in Palestine. He was a member of the War Cabinet when David Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, wrote a letter, known as the Balfour Declaration, on 2 November 1917 to Lionel Walter Rothschild, Baron Rothchild, in which Balfour ambiguously worded the British government's support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Smuts's influence on the creation of a mandate system at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, not only entrusted rule over South West Africa to South Africa, but conferred the temporary administration of Palestine, on Great Britain, to work in the interests of Jewish and Arab inhabitants. Many Arab Palestinians were incandescent with anger about the failure to grant them nationhood and self-government which they expected as a reward for their participation in the war against Turkey. Britain procrastinated over the future of Palestine because of the uneasy relationship between Jews and Arabs.

In the wake of World War II and the unimaginable suffering of the Holocaust, which generated considerable international support for Zionism and precipitated the UN partition of the Holy Land and the 14 May 1948 declaration of the nation of Israel, of which Smuts's friend Chaim Weizmann was its first president. Only ten days later, Smuts announced South Africa's recognition of the state of Israel (Steyn, 2015:157). Having been such a supporter of the establishment of the state of Israel, it is ironic that South Africa should invoke the 1948 Genocide Convention, to which both countries are signatories, to take Israel to the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court (ICC) over its actions in Gaza in November and December 2023. The ICC holds individuals responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The International Court of Justice arbitrates on disputes between nations (Corder, 2023).

Domestically, Smuts's commitment to conciliating the 'white races' in South Africa was unrelenting, but his close

relationship with Great Britain, and to a united South Africa within the Empire, was considerably distrusted by Afrikaners, such as his arch-rival Hertzog, because of Smuts's perceived betrayal of the Afrikaner nation. As a young man, he showed considerable promise in the Kruger administration. He admired Kruger, as a man and president (Lentin, 2010:10). Kruger, of course, had a biblical view of the Afrikaner nation, and likened the Great Trek from the Cape to the Israelites leaving Egypt for the Promised Land. For the Boers, the native question was both religious and political. Paul Kruger could without difficulty believe in the idea of the survival of the fittest, while attributing its moral efficacy to God. In his inaugural speech as State President of the South African Republic, 12 May 1898, Kruger deliberately evokes the analogy between Moses and the Children of Israel and the trek to freedom from the Cape:[2] 'For God has so clearly led us that the blindest heathen and the greatest unbeliever must acknowledge that it was God's hand that gave us our independence' (Kruger, 1902:339). The native peoples were to be tolerated only under sufferance. The Boers regarded men of colour as Canaanites, whom they, as the chosen people, could justifiably oppress in every way. Kruger's biographer at the time Smuts served in his administration related that there was little that could make him more angry than someone asserting that the black people were the spiritual equals of the white people. Kruger believed that they were not fully human (Holmes, 1900:64-5).

The Boers described the interior of South Africa as terra nullius, empty or waste land, by which they meant sparsely populated and under-cultivated. The editor of Paul Kruger's memoirs reminded the missionaries: 'South Africa has room for only one form of civilization, and that is the white man's civilization' (Kruger, 1902:41, fn 1). The Fundamental Law of the Transvaal Republic included a prohibition on admitting

2 This may be the source of Smuts's steadfast support for the Jewish cause. In fact, he gave a speech to the South African Jewish Federation in 1919, in which he made direct parallels between Jews and Afrikaners and between Palestine and the Karoo in South Africa

'equality of persons of colour with white inhabitants, neither in State nor Church' (cited in Holmes, 1900:74).

When the Second Anglo Boer War broke out, and Kruger withdrew from Pretoria, Smuts shouldered greater responsibility in the running of the Transvaal, until he became actively engaged in the fighting. A British Intelligence profile at the time characterised Smuts as strong and wiry, with a small beard, and ill-fitting false teeth. He was described as ruthless, disciplining his men with an iron hand (British Intelligence, 1901). This ruthlessness was a character trait that persisted, and he used the most brutal methods against those he thought acting unpatriotically, such as engaging in strikes or demonstrations, as for example, the General Strike of 1914, the Bulhoek massacre of 1921, and the Rand mines strike (Rand Rebellion) of 1922. In both strikes, he declared martial law. In 1914, he deployed the commandos under General de la Rey to subdue the strikers, and then illegally deported nine of the labour leaders to Britain, asking parliament to approve only after the event. In 1922, Smuts deployed government forces to suppress mostly white Afrikaners in their dispute with the SA Chamber of Mines. Hertzog described Prime Minister Smuts as having footsteps dripping with blood (Grimbeek, 2010:4).

Regarding his role in achieving a united South Africa in 1910, Smuts never tired of praising the Liberal Prime Minster of Britain, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, for being magnanimous in victory, something that did not endear Smuts to many Afrikaners, nor indeed did the involvement of South Africa in both World Wars at Smuts's behest. The British, he told American, Welsh and Scottish audiences, had been a ruthless and brutal Imperial force by which all of their nations had been oppressed. Britain, however, had become the model of conciliation, an exemplar that encouraged him in his conceptualisation of holism. The Empire had become compassionate and a champion of small nations, which were able to transcend narrow national boundaries and contribute to the common good of mankind (e.g. Smuts 1930a:6-7, and 1934:14).

Despite being so actively engaged in domestic and international politics, Smuts's powers of intellect are legendary. He did not confine himself to narrow specialisms, although he became an expert on grasses of the veld and was an enthusiastic botanist. He was well-read in modern science, and widely acknowledged as an authority so much so that he was elected President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1931, its centenary year. In addition, he read widely in African and European History; Law, for which he gained a double first at Cambridge; Poetry and Literature, on which he wrote a study of Walt Whitman (1973); and Philosophy. His major intellectual contribution to the life of the mind is his 1926 book *Holism and Evolution.* It is a work of synthesis, which may be said to constitute the connecting thread of principles which explain and define his view of the relation between theory and practice. He believed in a truly holistic and integrative approach to science and philosophy. A time would come, Smuts believed, when a true holistic and integrative approach to science would emerge. He thought that the compartmentalisation of science into separate disciplines inhibited rather than facilitated the development of our knowledge and understanding, and our capacity to comprehend and contribute resolutions to the world's most intractable problems.

Holism and Evolution is fundamentally a philosophical study which R.G. Collingwood, in his *The Present Need of a Philosophy* (1989:166-170), ranks along with R.N. Whitehead and Samuel Alexander as the best of its kind at a time of turbulence in Europe. They constituted a nascent 'philosophical movement in which epistemological discussions and old controversy between idealism and realism have fallen' (Collingwood, 1989:169). The initial inspiration for holism, however, came to Smuts while a student at Cambridge, fascinated by the idea of personality, which for him permeated and explained the great works of Goethe and Whitman. In studying their personalities, Smuts formulated the idea of holism (Smuts, 1926:x). The process of creating wholes out of disparate fragments was a tendency he found

in all things. For example, on returning from Cambridge, just before the Jameson Raid, Smuts witnessed 'huge waves of racial strife' (Smuts, 1942:148). After the Jameson Raid, years of political and social friction culminated in the Second Anglo Boer War, which, for Smuts, constituted a problem in holism. Smuts contended: 'We were left the fragments out of which we were to make a whole, and it was a problem of South African statesmen to follow up the ideal solution to our political problems' (Smuts, 1942:148; Joseph, 1970:125).

It is reasonable to assume that Smuts's voluminous collection of philosophy books provided much of the impetus for his own theory of holism. At Cambridge he was discouraged from reading philosophy, and not allowed to sit-in on lectures. He was therefore largely self-taught in philosophy (Lean, 1980:6, 27). In addition to Kant and Hegel, Smuts read extensively into pragmatism, a philosophy heavily influenced by philosophical idealism. He was also interested in Bergson's creative evolution, as well as the writings of J.A. Hobson (1909, 1988) and L.T. Hobhouse (1899, 1919, 1973). The greatest concentration of philosophical books he owned were written by the British idealists, not only T.H. Green, Edward Caird and Bernard Bosanquet, but also the lesser-known figures such as Henry Jones, H.H. Joachim, and David G. Ritchie, who wrote *Hegel and Darwin* (1893). The list of Smuts's books at his house is incomplete because some may have been taken by the children after his death, but there are books by important idealists, such as R.G. Collingwood and Michael Oakeshott, which are on his shelves, but not listed at all in the inventory held at the house and University of the Witwatersrand.

Smuts, like the philosophical idealists such as Hegel, begins with the assumption that experience constitutes a whole. Whereas the idealists begin with the idea of an undifferentiated whole, which requires an ontology to explain how this whole has become differentiated into all of the variety of experience we know, such as work, play, religion, civil society and so on, Smuts begins with atoms, inanimate objects, microbes, living organisms and consciousness as a series of wholes that combine to form more complex and sophisticated

wholes, including the universe as whole. The fundamental proposition is that these wholes are more than the sum of their parts, and that the particular is only meaningful because of its place in the greater whole. For Smuts, the process is at once natural and continuous. The source of its volition is energy, combining and creating novel and original material, both phenomenal and noumenal, giving rise, for example, to the higher spiritual forms such as music and philosophy. The processes are not always positive and guiding them to their ultimate goal requires intellectual vigilance, as for example in the creation of the League of Nations for a sustainable peace. Holism, Smuts believed, was an idea that assists us in comprehending the universe and life as systematic and purposeful. As intelligent components of it, human beings have a duty to contribute creatively to sustaining its achievements and promoting progress (Grimbeck & Savage, 2010:5).

For both Smuts and the idealists it is an evolutionary process, in which the progress from inanimate objects to organisms, nature and intellect, or spirit, is continuous, unlike, for example, T.H. Huxley (1989), and Alfred Russel Wallace (1889 and 1913), who posited a break between natural and ethical evolution. Principally, the idealists asserted the unity of life, and more importantly that man's mind must be continuous with animal perception, and that 'moral activity is continuous with non-moral impulse' (Sorley, 1904:34). The idealists call it the 'higher' evolution. While agreeing with naturalistic evolutionists that humanity is continuous with nature, the idealists contended that the lower must be explained and understood in terms of the higher. Seth, although dissenting from Hegel in many respects, agrees that: 'Nothing can be more certain than that all philosophical explanation must be explanation of the lower by the higher' (Seth, 1887:89). The Darwinian contention, Sorley succinctly summarised, is the belief that 'the higher forms are in all cases developments from simpler and lower forms' (Sorley, 1904:34). Smuts is, however, closer to Darwin than the

idealists in believing that the lower wholes on the scale of evolution explain the composition and existence of the higher.

It is a cliché to say that Jan Smuts is a neglected statesman, but it is true to say that his many international achievements were somewhat overshadowed and downplayed during the period South Africa was considered an international pariah (Garland, 2010). The fact that he had languished in relative obscurity, and that his career has only been excavated for study again by historians over the last couple of decades may account for the fact that statues and monuments to commemorate him largely escaped the wave of destruction that swept the memorials of prominent Imperialists and racists. For example, the statue commissioned by Winston Churchill to commemorate Smuts in Parliament Square, Westminster, unveiled in 1956, was not considered under threat after the toppling of Sir Edward Colston's statue in Bristol, England. Ironically, it was Winston Churchill's statute that was protected from perceived threats after it was defaced with graffiti denouncing him a racist. Even in Leicester there were calls to remove a statue of Gandhi, a long-time adversary of Smuts over discriminatory laws against Indians in South Africa, on the grounds that Gandhi too was a racist (BBC News, 2020). And in South Africa it is predominantly Cecil Rhodes, rather than Smuts, who has provoked the ire of anti-Imperialists. Nevertheless, the monuments of both Botha and Smuts have been defaced in Cape Town following the removal of Rhodes's statue in April 2015. In the same month, Louis Botha's statue was defaced in Parliament Square, Cape Town, and in June 2021, after the University of Cape Town agreed to rename the Smuts Hall student residence, members of the university's Economic Freedom Fighter's Student Council defaced the statue of Smuts that adorns it, placing plastic bags over his head, and demanding the removal of the statue. The legacy of apartheid and Imperialism continues to cast its dark shadow over Africa, and their architects are rightly reconsidered in the light of their consequences. This book is a contribution to that re-examination, offering, it is hoped, an

unvarnished and balanced assessment of the life and legacy of J.C. Smuts.

In this book the authors cover both familiar and unfamiliar themes. One of the principal themes running throughout the book addresses head-on the deficiency in the literature highlighted by Saul Dubow, namely, the question of racism and Smuts's reluctance to implement 'native' policies that may have averted future problems, rather than postpone them. We see throughout, a gap between the rhetoric and policy, and between policy and practice in its implementation. Amongst the familiar themes that are reappraised, are Smuts's successes and failures in policies and leadership, domestically and internationally, such as the role on the world stage (Hyslop); policy of trusteeship (Allsobrook & Boisen); as a strategist in World War I (Katz); style of premiership (Ndzendze); his reputation as a conciliator (Boucher, 2009); his native and social legislation before and during his second premiership (Dubow, Ngqulunga, Baines & Southall); and the philosophical basis and legacy of Holism (du Pisani & Sweet). Amongst the unfamiliar are Smuts's portrayal on film (Holt & Jansen van Vuuren); and his association with the atomic bomb (van Wyk).

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1. ‘Is freedom really worth this much?’

Smuts, De la Rey, and rethinking grand narratives in the film *Verraaiers* (Traitors)

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Introduction

Verraaiers (Traitors) (Eilers, 2012) is the first South African-made Second Anglo Boer War feature film produced since South Africa’s political transformation in the nineties. *Verraaiers* is the inversion of the typical war film: exposing the maladroit exercise of state power and darkly parodying the equilibrium of justice. It interrogates the fine line of treason during the war and, similar to the film *Breaker Morant* (Beresford, 1980), re-enacts the violence and emotional horror of executions by firing squad. Existing South African-made Second Anglo Boer War film stereotypes from the era of Afrikaner nationalism are rethought in the context of post-1994. The main narrative unfolds during General Kitchener’s ‘scorched earth policy’ when British soldiers were given the command to burn down the Boers’ farmhouses and all their belongings before taking the women, children, and farmworkers living there to concentration camps (Grundlingh, 2013:34). Commandant van Aswegen and his sons try to protect their families and their

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farms by signing the oath for British amnesty.[1] However, they are put on trial as traitors and sentenced to death on orders of Generals Koos de la Rey and Jan Smuts. Smuts is set up as the antagonist who initiates the order. A parallel storyline is set in the early 1950s. It depicts Van Aswegen's youngest son, Carel-Jan (who survived the executions), in dialogue with Gerrie - General de la Rey's former right-hand man who saved him from the brink of death.

Verraaiers received critical accolades at film festivals but failed to resonate with target audiences during its cinema release due to its pessimism and controversial messages. The chapter examines the historical context in which the film was made. We argue that the depicted interaction between Smuts and De la Rey represents the place that the two historical figures hold in popular memory. We critique aspects of *Verraaiers*' aesthetic execution, including its narrative structure and screenplay, while arguing compassion from the audience for the screenwriter and the difficulties one faces in realising a film text that negotiates a sensitive and contested cultural terrain of history.

Background on the historical context and the film's production

In the words of Jan Smuts, much of history does not appear in public records. 'It is in the realm of ideas, personal pleas and visions and unspoken motives that largely drive the wheels of action' (Smuts, quoted in Opperman Lewis, 2016). Thus, representing 'history in the visual media can be a unique way of rendering and interpreting the past' (Rosenstone, 2001:4). Therefore, this unique filmic representation of historical personages and events in the South African-made

1 According to Afrikaans grammar rules, the surname 'van Aswegen' is written with a small 'v' if it is preceded by a first name or a title like "Commandant", but with an uppercase 'V' if the surname stands on its own. Similarly, 'De la Rey' is written with a smaller case 'd' if preceded by a first name (such as Koos) or a rank (like General), but in uppercase if the surname is used on its own, i.e. De la Rey.

Second Anglo Boer War film *Verraaiers* are elaborated on in this chapter. Firstly, we contextualise it within the broader historiography of South African movies set against the backdrop of the Second Anglo Boer War.

The Second Anglo Boer War (1899-1902) was the first war of the twentieth century, and like many other historical conflicts, 'it turned out quite differently from what had been expected' (Woronoff, 2009:vii). Whereas the British government expected a swift end to the war, they had to revert to a scorched earth policy and turn the fertile countryside into a barren wasteland before claiming victory. The scorched earth policy also entailed the British incarceration of Boer women and children, as well as their black servants, in concentration camps. Grundlingh contends that: 'It was a strategy employed by the British high command to curtail the activities of Boer guerrilla fighters who lived off the land and used their farmsteads as bases. Through neglect and incompetence, 27 929 Boers died from disease [in these camps' (Grundlingh, 1999:21). Therefore, this war left a sensitive and contested cultural legacy of bitter memories and mutual recriminations.

Yet the war's harshness was generally not represented in South African period piece films about the conflict, especially those produced during the Afrikaner nationalism era (from the 1940s to the 1990s).[2] This trend began with one of South Africa's first feature-length films, *De Voortrekkers* (The Pioneers) (Shaw, 1916). Though the film depicted the Great Trek, a mass migration of white farmers from the Cape Colony to flee British Imperialism, *De Voortrekkers'*s narrative and plot steered clear of the friction between Afrikaans and English white South Africans and conformed to a prevailing hegemony of a unified white nation (Tomaselli, 1985:18). Prime minister Jan Smuts's pro-British regime constructed this 'unified

2 Our chapter uses the term 'Afrikaner' as a cultural signifier for white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans who identify with the culture. They are primarily descendants of the Boer nation. Though most current Afrikaans speakers hail from the Khoisan or so-called coloured people, with the term "Afrikaner", we refer to white Afrikaans-speakers only.

nation' narrative following the end of the Second Anglo Boer War because he needed the white English-speaking vote to maintain power (Smith, 1999:174).

Though many Afrikaans films set against the backdrop of the Second Anglo Boer War, such as Joseph Albrecht's short film *Sarie Marais* (1931) as well as the features *Die Ruiter in die Nag* (The Rider in the Night) (Perold, 1963), *Die Kavaliers* (The Cavaliers) (De Witt, 1966), *Die Kavaliers*'s sequel, the musical drama *Kruger Miljoene* (Kruger Millions) (Hall, 1967) and *Majuba: Heuwel van Duiwe* (Majuba: Hill of Doves) (Millin, 1968), depict the friction and English and Boer characters at war with each other, they still present an 'underlying civility, real or imagined, between the two sides' (Jeffery, 2017:160). Therefore, these representations could be interpreted as trying to maintain a status quo of unity between Afrikaners and English-speaking white people in the context of the sixties – especially since it was in this decade that the South African government announced its withdrawal from the British Commonwealth and declared the country a republic (Jansen van Vuuren, 2016:38).

In the decade after South Africa became a democracy in 1994, academics discussed the so-called Afrikaner identity crisis (Lambrechts & Visagie, 2009). Yes, Afrikaners were embraced by then President Nelson Mandela as part of the 'Rainbow Nation', yet with the new dispensation, they had to come to grips with a loss of societal prominence and, even more importantly, the unmasking of many of the myths constructed by the former Nationalist government's ideological apparatus.[3] Reid contends: 'White identities... had

3 The population of South Africa is often referred to as the 'Rainbow Nation' since it consist of many cultural, racial and ethnic groups. However, like the different colours of the rainbow, these groups exist as one unit. See: Times of India. 2007. Why is the Republic of South Africa referred to as a Rainbow Nation? [online]. Available from: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/why-is-the-republic-of-south-africa-referred-to-as-a-rainbow-nation/articleshow/2515812.cms

to be renegotiated, but... needed to speak the reconciliatory ideological discourse of the new South Africa and the Rainbow Nation myth' (2012:47).

With the changing of street, city, and municipality place names to reflect and pay homage to stalwarts of the anti-apartheid struggle, not only Afrikaners but also English-speaking minorities in KwaZulu-Natal felt as if their heritage was symbolically targeted because attacking a cultural icon is often taken quite literally as a personal attack on an individual or culture. (Krog, 2013). Meanwhile, some Afrikaners were rebelling, and this rebellion was reflected in their music. In 2006, two prominent songs tapped into a broader sentiment, especially amongst young white Afrikaners who were 'fed up with being demonised as nasty racists who have done nothing right while constantly being reminded of their 'shameful history'' (Oelofse, 2007). In a local radio hit *Nie Langer* (No Longer) from the Pretoria-based band *Klopjag* (Raid), its lead singer, Sallas de Jager, sang the lyrics that he would 'stand at the back of the queue and wear my rainbow on my sleeve, but I will not say sorry anymore' (*translated from the original Afrikaans song's lyrics*)[4]. However, what drew the most attention and focused the public sphere's attention on the so-called 'Afrikaner plight' was the singer Bok van Blerk's song *De La Rey*, which was released in 2007.

General Koos de la Rey, the 'Lion of the Western Transvaal', is historically known for his outstanding military achievements during the Second Anglo Boer War and 'the good treatment he gave to the wounded British officer Lord Methuen and other prisoners of war' (Krog, 2013:180). His steadfastness as a *Bittereinder* (bitter ender) who refused to surrender, has made him revered amongst Afrikaners. Therefore, the anthem calling for De la Rey to return and be a leader to the Boer descendants found an audience proudly singing along to the song's lyrics in restaurants, pubs and traditional *sokkie* (an Afrikaner dance style) dance venues.

4 This is the same Sallas de Jager who wrote and produced the feature film *Verraaiers*.

The song 'made front-page headlines in the USA and the U.K., and an extraordinary number of radio and television hosts, intellectuals, commentators, editors, journalists, politicians and ordinary letter writers felt obliged to give their interpretation of the song' (Krog, 2013:177). The ruling ANC government felt uncomfortable enough with the song's lyrics to release a media statement titled *De la Rey and its coded message fermenting revolutionary sentiments*. Within this statement, the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC, 2007) warns explicitly against the chorus line 'De la Rey, De la Rey, will you lead the Boers once again', being used as a rallying cry for right-wing Afrikaner movements. The song's popularity spurred the songwriters Sean Else and Johan Vorster to collaborate with playwright Deon Opperman in creating the stage musical *Ons vir Jou* in 2008 (We for You, Else, 2008). The musical focuses on the exploits of De la Rey and his family from the lead-up to the war until the peace agreement was signed.

In 2011, Sallas de Jager wrote the screenplay and produced the film *Verraaiers*. *Verraaiers* premièred at the 2012 *Silwerskerm* (silver screen) film festival in Camps Bay, South Africa. Festival-goers voted the film the 'audience's favourite feature', and Gys de Villiers won the Best Leading Male Actor award for his portrayal of Commandant van Aswegen. As the film was made predominantly by Afrikaans filmmakers (descendants of the nation who lost the war), many viewers expected it to portray the Boers' heroic exploits during the war.[5] However, in contrast, the filmmakers distinctly consider the film's post-apartheid context in constructing its core theme. This theme underwrites a mature and circumspect criticism of war by focusing on its victims, specifically those who did not subscribe to the dominant Afrikaner hegemony

5 *Verraaiers*'s main credits include nine Afrikaners: director Paul Eilers, screenwriter (and producer) De Jager, producer Danie Bester and six executive producers. The 'other' executive producers (who are not native Afrikaans-speakers) are Michael Auret, Joel Phiri and Themba Sibeko.

and thus were branded as traitors (Jansen van Vuuren, 2015:58).

Verraaiers's Narrative and Structure

Verraaiers is the saga of a tragic hero or so-called traitor, Commandant van Aswegen, his young son Carel-Jan, his sons-in-law, Henry Ahrens and Robert Machlachlan, and their close friend Ronald Boyd, who find themselves on the wrong side of history. Upon hearing about Kitchener's scorched earth policy and how Boer women and children are put into concentration camps, they take up the British-offered amnesty and surrender to save their farm and reunite as a family unit.[6] The world-famous soldier, statesman and intellectual, General Jan Smuts, is depicted as the character who convinces General de la Rey (and the other Boer commanders) that they should prosecute and execute Boers who surrender before the end of the war. Therefore, the Van Aswegens are convicted of treason and sentenced to death. After much inner turmoil and reflection, De la Rey rejects Smuts's decision and pardons all extended Van Aswegen family members. He sends his assistant Gerrie to Wolmaransstad to convey the message, but Gerrie arrives too late to save the men, as they are executed mere minutes before his arrival. Only the youngest son, Carel-Jan, is spared.

Verraaiers' producer and screenwriter, Sallas de Jager, and his father, the film's executive producer, Piet de Jager, were inspired to make the film after reading Albert Blake's book *Boereverraaier: Teregstellings tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog* (Boer Traitor: Executions during the Second Anglo Boer War) which was published in 2010. Blake, in turn, acknowledges the groundbreaking research conducted by historian Albert Grundlingh and originally published in 1979 as *Die 'Hendsoppers' en 'Joiners': die rasionaal en verskynsel van*

6 Machlachlan is married to Van Aswegen's daughter, Martha. Though he sympathises with the Boer cause, he is not cut out to be a soldier.

verraad (The 'hands-uppers' and 'joiners': the rationale and phenomenon of treason) (Grundlingh, 1979)

De Jager adapted Chapter 7 of Blake's book, which documents the treason trials of the Boers that happened in the Wolmaransstad area.[7] Blake conducted extensive research from courts material contained in the archives and narrated the events that led up to the treason trials of the 48-year-old Jacobus Petrus Daniel Theunissen, his son, Christiaan Jacobus Theunissen, his two sons-in-law, Henry Ahrens and Robert Machlachlan, and their friend, Ronald Boyd. De Jager changed two of the central characters' surnames (from Theunissen to Van Aswegen). He also took more freedom in their characterisation, making the older Van Aswegen more sympathetic and likeable to the audience. Whereas Blake depicts Theunissen's motivation as being greed, since he does not want to lose his properties to arson, Van Aswegen is depicted as a family man who puts their interest and safety above all else.

In his book, Blake writes that the so-called Boer traitors' execution is 'one of the greatest tragedies of Afrikaners' history' and that the shame and trauma associated with it urged the 1970s National Party government to prohibit the publication of the names of Boer *hendsoppers*' (Blake, 2010b:13). Thus, apart from Albert Grundlingh's book (mentioned above), most twentieth-century authors ignored this section of Second Anglo Boer War history. Blake further alleges that in 1910, Louis Botha burned documents containing information about the Boers who fought on the British side (the so-called *joiners*). However, he could not find documents as evidence to substantiate this. Blake adds, 'More than just the names of the traitors were kept silent. There was a definite opinion that it was better to withhold their deeds and influence from the descendants [of the Boer *volk*]' (*authors' translation*). According to him, the Boer treason and the resulting

7 Wolmaransstad is today located in the North West province of South Africa. At the time of the war, it was a town located in the geographical area of the Transvaal, also known as the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek.

executions have formed part of the so-called 'memory loss' that existed amongst Afrikaners for most of the twentieth century (Blake, 2010a:17).[8] This memory was revived with De Jager and director Paul Eilers' film, *Verraaiers*.

Verraaiers falls in the court-martial courtroom drama genre like its perspicacious counterpart, *Breaker Morant*. Yet, its structure is different. In *Breaker Morant*, the trial proceeds from the beginning to the end of the film, functioning as a unifying spine from which the story is told. In the form of testimonies or evidence put before the court, the past is then revealed to the audience as flashbacks. In contrast, *Verraaiers* is structured with two separate narratives. In the 1953 opening scene, High Court Judge Gerrie prepares his closing statements for a court case dealing with treason charges. He reads his key arguments out loud to himself, and thus, it plays out as a monologue. Looking at the camera, he concludes with the words: 'War is madness... and treason is a broken term...'

We then cut to November 1899 and meet De la Rey in a hospital tent. He bids farewell to his son Adaan, who was fatally wounded in a surprise attack that the British launched on the Boers. In the next scene, De la Rey meets Commandant van Aswegen and expresses his internal conflict and doubts about the war. De la Rey looks at Adaan's corpse before asking Van Aswegen, 'Is freedom really worth this much?' These words would continue to haunt Van Aswegen and play an influential role in his decision to take the neutrality oath. The viewer is finally introduced to a third narrative on 23 February 1953, featuring a grandfather (a much older Carel-Jan) and his grandson travelling to Pretoria by motor car.[9]

8 Similarly, the black experience and suffering during the Second Anglo Boer War were relegated by historians until S.J. Maphalala's 1978 Master's thesis, J.S. Mohlamme's 1985 publication, *Black People in the Boer Republics during and in the Aftermath of the South African War of 1899-1902* and other authoritative publications by E. van Heyningen and S.V. Kessler.

9 Later in the film, these two meet Gerrie at the Paul Kruger statue (close to the Palace of Justice on Church Square) in Pretoria. We then discover that the characters are

The following sequence is set in August 1900. Van Aswegen finds out about Kitchener's scorched earth policy when he applies for leave from the commando to attend his daughter's wedding. His superior tells him that this policy would entail that Boers' farms, livestock, and towns would be torched and that the British would relocate Boer women and children (as well as their black farm workers and servants) to concentration camps.

At the wedding, we witness his daughter marrying a Scottish treasurer, Robert Machlachlan. Machlachlan and his best man, the shopkeeper Ronald Boyd, were born in Scotland but grew up in the Transvaal. The wedding scene establishes the closeness of the family unit and foreshadows that Van Aswegen will make sacrifices to protect them. He tells his family about the new policy and convinces his son, Carel-Jan, and son-in-law, Henry Ahrens, to also take the neutrality oath.

When the Van Aswegens receive orders to return to the front, Machlachlan and Boyd offer to assist them in escaping to the British Cape Colony. However, all of the men are arrested. During the treason trial, it is argued that the two Scottish men are Transvaal burghers, and thus, they are also convicted of treason charges and are executed with the Van Aswegens.

The film starts in 1953, introducing an aged Gerrie and Carel-Jan, and ends with them reminiscing on Church Square in Pretoria. Thus, one deducts that the main narrative (set between 1899 and 1902 and culminating with the Van Aswegens' execution) is a prolonged flashback. This establishes a creative interplay between a past and a future and vice versa. The complex story structure results in an impressionistic mosaic of meaning that is not easily absorbed in a single viewing of the film, but strongly impacts the viewer's subconscious. The narrative design makes the film more realistic than a formulaic 'classic' movie structure. Though the film ends with Gerrie and Carel-Jan reminiscing

commemorating the Van Aswegen family's deaths annually on the day that the executions happened.

on Church Square and thus bringing closure about the war events, it remains unfinished in viewers' minds in a continuing interaction with a meta-narrative.

Though this chapter's authors revere the narrative design, we acknowledge that it also could have led to *Verraaiers* being classified as an art-house film, which would have limited a broad uptake of the film by South African audiences.

With its sombre gravity, reminiscent of the works of the novelist William Faulkner, *Verraaiers* quite literally, through its opening monologue, denounces war as insanity. Moreover, while the anguish expressed through films such as *Breaker Morant* (1980) or *Gallipoli* (Weir, 1981) is of an order that can still be soothed through hero redemption, *Verraaiers* interrogates the militaristic hero ethos and, through multiple dialogue lines, questions if freedom is worth the consequences of war.

Following in the footsteps of director Katinka Heyns's iconic South African drama series *Feast of the Uninvited* (Heyns, 2008), written by P.G. Du Plessis, *Verraaiers* is an imperative film in the Second Anglo Boer War canon. The post-script in the film's closing titles is a quotation from the same P.G. du Plessis that reads: *'But it will take generations before the wailing of our wounding of others - our leprosy of unreality, the leprosy in our genes that wounded us so much will die down over the lakes'.* This quote might suggest a degree of self-consciousness amongst those who call themselves Afrikaners about their historical apartheid sins.[10] This self-consciousness might account for the decline of Second Anglo Boer War-themed filmic narratives produced after the end of apartheid in the early nineties. *Verraaiers* deals with the war's continuing repercussions on South African society.

10 In Hélène Opperman Lewis' book *Apartheid, Britain's Bastard Child* (2016:7), she argues that these sins of the Afrikaans Nationalist government can be partly blamed on the collective memory amongst Afrikaners of Boer suffering and the far-reaching effects of the humiliation suffered during the Second Anglo Boer War and its immediate aftermath.

With its post-1994 context, it might be regarded as an emergent new form and a significant turning point of its oeuvre, a sociologically braver and more liberating film compared to the Second Anglo Boer War films of the 1960s that scholars aptly referred to as unremarkable *escapist* films (Botha, 2012:51).

The significance of De la Rey and Smuts as film characters

According to historians, De la Rey was a man of peace. On the eve of the outbreak of the Second Anglo Boer War, De la Rey clashed in a secret crisis meeting of the Transvaal Parliament with the party of Boers led by President Kruger and his adviser Jan Smuts, at the time State Attorney of the Transvaal Republic.[11] In the crisis meeting, De la Rey warned that Britain was a great power that could not be defeated in the imminent war. He had advocated that the Boers adapt and temporarily cooperate to co-exist with British Imperialism (Armstrong, 1937). In response, Paul Kruger branded De La Rey a *coward* and a *traitor*. However, after war was declared, De la Rey proved true to his words and, as a General, was the greatest military tactician the Boers had (Pretorius, 2009:115). One of South Africa's earlier colonial historians, George McCall Theal, wrote that in 1899, the Boer population that had evolved in southern Africa already numbered four hundred thousand (McCall Theal, 2012). Some speculate that had Kruger heeded De la Rey's judgement of voluntary coexistence with the British and the war had not happened, these statistics (by the generally current population growth rate before the war) meant that today, Afrikaners would have been one of the

11 Some argue that the Boers were led into the trap set by Lord Milner and Joseph Chamberlain, Britain's Colonial Secretary, when neither side had casus belli. According to Armstrong (1937), Cecil Rhodes and the significant City of London financial houses like Werner & Beit urgently needed the war for their Imperialist expansion plans.

largest population groups in South Africa (Opperman Lewis, 2016).[12]

Jan Smuts studied law at Cambridge University and achieved brilliant academic qualifications. After the failed Jameson raid, Smuts distanced himself from Cecil John Rhodes and even went as far as renouncing his Cape Colony citizenship and moving to Johannesburg to become a citizen of the Transvaal Republic.[13] In the lead-up to the Second Anglo Boer War, Smuts initially 'pleaded with the Kruger government not to give the British government any cause to encroach on the independence of the Transvaal and urged Kruger to introduce franchise reform' (Pretorius, 2009:419). In a memorandum that was released in September 1899, Smuts suggested that 'if war did break out [the Boers should implement] a quick republican offensive before British reinforcements could arrive' (Pretorius, 2009:419). However, these suggestions were not fully implemented.

Smuts drafted the ultimatum to Britain declaring the War of 1899-1902. Pakenham (1979) writes that the Boer ultimatum gave notice that if the British troops built on the borders of the Boer Republics and other apparent preparations for war were not curtailed and reversed within a specific time, the Boer Republics would take the offensive. The British side used this ultimatum to make the Boers appear to be the belligerent party. The British press publicised the ultimatum to inflame British public opinion. After the Jameson Raid, Cecil Rhodes was temporarily in England. At the time, he stated

12 On this basis, most scholars agree that colonialism and its Imperialism have much to answer for in South Africa, Australia, the United States and Canada. Yet some argue that the genocide in the British concentration camps was self-inflicted because of the *Bittereinders*' persistence in continuing to fight after the Boer capitals of Bloemfontein and Pretoria had fallen (BBC Rees-Mogg, 2019).

13 When Paul Kruger appointed Smuts as State Attorney of the Transvaal, *The Star* newspaper wrote: "Though he may have all the precociousness of a Pitt, we consider twenty-eight is rather too young an age for the State Attorney of the South African Republic" (Farwell, 1976:335).

that he did not think there would be a war and that President Kruger 'was not such a bad fellow after all' (Pakenham, 1979).[14] Smuts became a Boer general, and 'from July 1900, Smuts was attached to the commando of General De la Rey in the western Transvaal' (Pretorius, 2009:419). This is the period depicted in *Verraaiers*.

Smuts was a ruthless and pragmatic political strategist and, in the not-too-distant future, was destined to become a significant player in international relations. He participated in the Versailles Peace Conference after World War I, drafted the document upon which 'The League of Nations' was founded, and contributed to forming the British Commonwealth. He outlined the Union Constitution of South Africa, bringing the single state into being in 1910.[15] Under his leadership, the country became a prominent member of the British Empire and, subsequently, the British Commonwealth (Steyn, 2015).

Judging from the brief description above, we argue that Smuts and De la Rey are not only key historical figures but have also been made into myths by their depiction in oral tales, the media, and popular culture (Krog, 2013). They continue to hold a powerful mythological status, especially amongst South Africans. Post 1994, as South Africa made the transition from apartheid to democracy, many creatives aimed to use their art to reconfigure certain myths created by the colonial and later the apartheid government (Reid, 2012:49). Therefore, one could argue that depicting these characters (De la Rey and Smuts) in the same film would, in advertising terms, be regarded as a unique selling proposition (USP) of *Verraaiers.*

14 Some scholars argue that the real reason causing the Second Anglo Boer War was the intention of World Capital to expand through a vast source of gold supply. This required Britain to destroy southern Africa's agricultural economy to ensure a supply of cheap and disenfranchised labour to realise the potential of gold production (See Friedman, 1975; Meredith, 2008).

15 Smuts rejected a Federal Constitution like Australia's because it would be "too expensive" to run (Friedman, 1975; Meredith, 2008).

Smuts is such a complex personality that historians will never be able to gauge whether he was collaborating with the British Empire to his advantage.[16] He was not exceptionally compassionate to his Afrikaner people, and scholarship attesting to this strongly influenced De Jager while creating Smuts as the antagonist of *Verraaiers*. Smuts is the one who sends the Van Aswegens to their death even after De la Rey intercedes on their behalf – and pleads that their sentences be lifted.[17]

Historically, while leading the pro-British United Party as South African Prime Minister after World War II, Smuts was unexpectedly defeated by the Afrikaner National Party in 1948. After this apparent victory of Afrikaner nationalism, South Africa began steadily descending from its pedestal on the world stage. South Africa was later to be labelled as a threat to world peace and the world's most significant pariah state. The damaged Boer victims of the concentration camps and their following generation were destined to cast themselves as the predators exploiting South Africa's black population. Some have argued that this was partly caused by the Second Anglo Boer War's scorched earth policy. Its aftermath seriously crippled Afrikaners by wiping out some of their most prominent family lines, and some also argued their democratic values and culture of non-racism (Opperman Lewis, 2016:371).

De la Rey pitted against Smuts

The opportunity to write a scene depicting Jan Smuts and De la Rey interacting and facing each other is an audacious act. It

16 Pakenham writes about reading these confidential War Office files: "…those that survived a bizarre decision to 'weed' them out in the 1950s – the files on which much of Amery's and Maurice's work had been based" (Pakenham, 1979:xv).

17 De Jager discussed his process of researching and writing *Verraaiers*'s screenplay after the film's première at the 2012 *Silwerskermfees*. The festival was hosted by kykNET (Multichoice) in partnership with the film distributor Nu Metro.

presented screenwriter De Jager with a unique challenge to pen an encounter that stays with the audience through the film.

In a critical moment of the narrative, the Boer commanders (under De la Rey's leadership) discuss a response to the large number of Boer men who are surrendering to the British to return to their farms. Smuts then proposes that these men should be given an ultimatum: to return to their commandos or to be arrested on treason charges (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: In *Verraaiers* (2012), Morné du Toit portrays the role of Jan Smuts

True to life, De la Rey is represented as a gentleman, but perhaps in the film, he is more naïve than historians credit him to be (See Figure 2). However, his historical stature is not entirely reduced, and the myth survives fairly in this filmic portrayal. Smuts argues for the use of the death penalty to deter the Boers from taking the neutrality oath (which they took in return for British amnesty to save their families, farms, and properties). The film shows that even while under the spell of Smuts's logical argument, De la Rey's conscience is in a dilemma of trying to reconcile his integrity as a human being with the matter of state hegemony, as cogently expressed by Smuts (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: De la Rey, portrayed by actor Deon Lotz in *Verraaiers* (2012)

Figure 3: Smuts making a compelling argument to the Boer Generals in *Verraaiers* (2012)

In the film's dialogue, the Smuts character argues, 'The death of 10 or 15 cowards is nothing compared to gaining 2 000 or 3 000 men'.

As might be expected according to his mythical reputation, Smuts appears to be quite cunning, expressed

through his eye contact and eye movements. As shown in Figure 3, the acting and direction of these particular shots of Smuts is an excellent example of Orson Welles' claim that the camera can sometimes speak a greater truth than words. Smuts counters De la Rey's questions about needing a defence counsel at the trial and designs the trial process to ensure that executions will take place. He gets the better of De la Rey by overcoming the latter's reservations with an assurance that his proclamation will provide representations of mitigating circumstances to military command before death sentences are carried out. Smuts's arguments seem logical and pragmatic, with De la Rey showing the younger Smuts due regard and deference.

This scene is superbly written and executed by Paul Eilers and cinematographer Tom Marais. Smuts's complex and coldly pragmatic personality is characterised by playing on existing Afrikaans viewers' distrust about his bona fides and instilling apprehension about what will become of the Van Aswegens.

The level of intrigue surrounding the trial and convictions in *Verraaiers* parallels that of *Breaker Morant*, where it is made apparent that the convictions are to be secured regardless of any merits that the defence might hold. Van Aswegen argues that before the announcement of the scorched earth policy, he was a brave leader who secured many victories for the Boers. He also contends that he was the one who convinced his son-in-law, Henry Ahrens, and son, Carel-Jan, to lay down arms and take the neutrality oath. The Scottish shopkeeper, Boyd, pleads that he offered all of his shop's supplies to the Boer's war effort and that this action even bankrupted him. These arguments dispel earlier notions upheld by Afrikaans Second Anglo Boer War films that 'no sacrifice was too much for the Boer and the Afrikaner cause' – a belief supporting the tenancies of Afrikaner nationalism during apartheid. Therefore, this film rejects illusions that the war was an 'era of innocence' for the Afrikaners and instead points to a sense of shame held by Afrikaners, notably 'a shame that is not desired' (Krog, 2013:185).

Later in the film, De la Rey's concerns about the subsequent treason trials led him to inspect the court and prison on an abandoned Boer farm. Only then does he discover that the same Van Aswegen (previously directly under De la Rey's command and a close advisor to him) heads the condemned group. However, despite his rank, De la Rey finds himself unable to release the prisoners because he recognises their trial and conviction in an official court of law. State procedure cannot simply be overridden, and the proper channels must be followed in consultation with State Attorney General Smuts. De la Rey also offers to write a mitigation letter to Smuts to plead for a pardon from the death penalty.

Still, Smuts stubbornly refuses to accept any of the mitigations sent to him by the Van Aswegen family and the two Scots, Machlachlan and Boyd, as extenuating circumstances sufficient to reprieve the death sentences. His subsequent response to De la Rey's letter is polite but firm, impatient, and relatively insensitive to the sanctity of the human lives at stake. He writes: 'Indeed, I was wrong. I think Van Aswegen senior, Ahrens and the two Scots' sentences should be carried out. However, concerning Van Aswegen junior [Carel-Jan], given that he is so young, I suggest we reduce his sentence to five years of hard labour. I leave the decision up to you'. After that, De la Rey, in exasperation, finally shouts: 'To hell with Smuts. I am going to pardon all five of them!'.

In these later sequences, particularly when he is psychologically breaking free of the spell cast by Smuts's forceful reasoning, De la Rey is depicted in his characteristic mythical long cloak jacket, where he replaces his hat on his bald head to connote a recovery of his power and potential resurrection of the Afrikaner nation. De La Rey orders his legal adviser and assistant, Gerrie, to ride to the farm in haste to stop the executions. The executions are supposed to occur at 7.00 am, but the overeager prison warder moves the execution time forward and leads the prisoners out for execution at 5.30 am. Gerrie is only in time to save the youngest son, Carel-Jan. Since the executioners did not receive the pardons from Smuts

and De la Rey in time, they were also on the verge of shooting Carel-Jan when Gerrie arrived.

The film then closes with a return to the 1953 narrative. Gerrie and Carel-Jan are lost for words when Carel-Jan's grandson asks whether they might also build a statue for his great-grandfather (Commandant van Aswegen), who was shot in the war. Gerrie responds by saying, 'I hope so, I really hope so.'

Protagonists, Antagonists, and Filmic Legacy

Film theory holds that the protagonist is the main character the audience identifies with and through whose eyes the story is usually told. It is also often the character who learns how to overcome an inner flaw and thus goes through psychological change (Russin & Downs, 2012). *Verraaiers* presents the audience with various heroes to associate with, depending on their ideological outlook and beliefs: Van Aswegen, De la Rey, and Smuts. The viewer could also choose to identify with Carel-Jan and Gerrie, the protagonists of the 1953 plotline, and the characters from whose memories the more extended narrative is derived.

Before *Verraaiers*'s production, Smuts and De la Rey existed as mythical heroes and great leaders in the public domain. Therefore, we argue that their depiction overshadows Van Aswegen's in the audience's after-memory of this film. The interaction between De la Rey and Smuts within the film has a coded allegorical meaning open to various interpretations. However, most importantly, their first (and only physical) interaction in *Verraaiers* is neither minor nor peripherally incidental. It is a turning point in the plot and the catalyst that sets the ball rolling for the arrest and subsequent trial. This leads to the film's climax – the execution of the apparent anti-hero and tragic protagonist, Commandant van Aswegen, and his family.

A counter-argument could thus be that De la Rey is the real protagonist of *Verraaiers*, most notably in overcoming his flaw and learning to stand up to Smuts – to which the

story of Van Aswegen and his sons are a foil. Where the de facto executioner of the Australians in *Breaker Morant* is Lord Kitchener – an Englishman, not an Australian, in *Verraaiers*, the Van Aswegens' execution is condoned by their fellow Afrikaner and supposed comrade, Jan Smuts. After the first screening of *Verraaiers* at the *Silwerskerm* Film Festival in August 2012, some viewers also recalled Smuts's historical role in Jopie Fourie's 1914 execution. Taking the topical significance of the 2007 De la Rey song (and the controversy of calling for De la Rey's reincarnation to come forth) into consideration, it makes one wonder if Carel-Jan's survival in the film is perhaps a hopeful message to Afrikaners.

Given the apparent similarities between *Breaker Morant* and *Verraaiers* and the former film's success amongst international audiences, it was surprising to some that South Africans treated *Verraaiers* with indifference when it was released at the local box office in 2013.[18] It was previously argued that it could be attributed to the portrayal of the main protagonist, Van Aswegen, as a tragic anti-hero. Usually, audiences desire a willing hero with whom they can identify, and the Van Aswegens' death and the film's end message might have left the viewers disillusioned (Jansen van Vuuren, 2015:59). However, giving too much importance to archetypes may underestimate cinema audiences, and encourage formulaic and stereotypical storytelling concepts. Other reasons for its lack of success at cinemas could be attributed to its complex narrative structure that might not appeal to the average blockbuster filmgoer. Furthermore, Judge Gerrie's monologue, aimed directly at the camera and critiquing war and subsequent treason trials, is perhaps too preachy for a modern audience.

Britz agrees with Krog's 2013 sentiments about Afrikaners' post-1994 aversion to change. She argues that

18 Despite its initial failure at local cinemas, the executive producer told the authors that sales of the film in DVD format were quite successful. *Verraaiers* was also subsequently screened multiple times in the years since then by Multichoice's DSTV channels, kykNET and fliekNET.

Verraaiers falls into the category of films that receive a lukewarm response from an Afrikaans audience that believes that they are not like the characters portrayed on screen, thus 'indicating the audience's avoidance of being confronted with contradictory representations [of what they believe to be] the Afrikaner' (Britz, 2017:101).

The target Afrikaans audience is asked to make a problematic subconscious decision after seeing the film: to choose whether they can still identify with either De la Rey or Jan Smuts as heroes. In this sophisticated film, the revered peacemaker (De la Rey) and diplomat (Smuts) make decisions that ultimately led to the destruction of the Van Aswegens, a nuclear family consisting of both Afrikaners and the two white English-speaking Scots. Thus, *Verraaiers* could also be regarded as putting Smuts and De La Rey on trial, where the film audience is the jury. It is also a very pessimistic film about the helplessness and betrayal of citizens at the mercy of those entrusted with the powers of the state and the danger of trusting political songs or advertisements for any 'great' leaders from wherever the source. The reason why *Verraaiers* failed at the box office might be that the truth is too bitter a pill to swallow, or it could more probably be that the film was not exhibited long enough to become fully appreciated through word of mouth.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the historical context in which the film *Verraaiers* (2012) was produced and released. The film's failure at the box office was attributed in past scholarship to the portrayal of Van Aswegen as a tragic hero who dies at the end of the story. While the above deduction is partly correct, the explanation should also be sought regarding other factors, such as its narrative design (which can be confusing to a non-film literate viewer) and its grave message. We conclude that though Commandant van Aswegen is set up to be the main protagonist in *Verraaiers*, the characters of De La Rey and Smuts loom larger than life, and, in a sense, 'steal the show'

from Van Aswegen. Therefore, after careful consideration, we argue that De la Rey is the real main protagonist and Smuts the film's antagonist. However, *Verraaiers* covertly hides this fact. The film's true meaning has to be searched for in the meta-narrative beyond any hegemonic strictures.

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2. Jan Smuts and the World Counter-Revolution 1917-1923[1]

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At 7.20 p.m. on Tuesday 1 April 1919, a train steamed out of Paris's Gare de l'Est. On board was a delegation dispatched from the Supreme Council of the victorious powers of World War I. The mission was led by Jan Christiaan Smuts, Minister of Defence and Deputy Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa and a member, since June 1917, of the Imperial War Cabinet. Smuts's task was to negotiate with the revolutionary government of Béla Kun, which had seized power in Hungary in the aftermath of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the subsequent failure of the liberal government of Count Mihály Károlyi. The Council was considering how to handle the military confrontation that had been shaping up between the Romanian and Hungarian forces over disputed border territories. It had been toying with sending a Romanian army, under the command of France's General Charles Mangin, to crush the revolutionaries. But the Council would first allow the South African to exercise the powers of intellect and persuasion with which he was credited by his admirers (Nicolson, 1933: Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:105-118).

Smuts was preoccupied with the question of how best to quell revolution in Europe. He was steadily hardening in his attitudes to the Bolsheviks and their supporters in Hungary, Germany and elsewhere. Just before leaving on his journey, Smuts wrote to a liberal-minded friend who was inclined to give the revolutionaries the benefit of the doubt: 'No I don't agree with you on Bolshevism. I fear it is a disease of socialism

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arising from the horrors and sufferings of the war, but still a disease. You cannot save mankind by barring the élite and letting the proletariat (as it is called) run riot' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:98). Yet he was no simple-minded reactionary; he already found himself in strong opposition to the punitive attitudes of the leaders in Paris towards the defeated nations. His project was to build prosperous and stable new states that could stem the revolutionary tide. Smuts's preference was for an approach to the post-war settlement that would stabilise a new political order by supporting the forces of the political centre. However, he did not rule out the use of the Allies' armed forces to crush the revolutionaries, if all else failed.

Outside South Africa, Jan Smuts is largely forgotten today, yet in his time he was regarded within the British political establishment as a titan. He was, at the time he went to Paris, hailed in the corridors of Westminster for his role in overcoming the division between Afrikaners and Britons, thus helping to pave the way for the unification of South Africa as a settler-dominated state in 1910. He was equally applauded for his part in commanding Imperial forces against the Germans in South West Africa (1914-1915) and in East Africa (1916). He would receive further British accolades for his role as protagonist of the Commonwealth idea, especially during his two periods as Prime Minister of South Africa (1919-1924 and 1939-1948). The prestige of the Union of South Africa reached an all-time high in Britain in the years of World War II, when South African troops under Smuts's active direction fought in Ethiopia, the Western Desert and Italy. A personal friend of Winston Churchill and of John Maynard Keynes, Smuts was invited to address the UK parliament in Westminster in 1942 and was ultimately to become the Chancellor of Cambridge University. He was then, an extremely significant figure in the networks of British global power (Hancock, 1962, 1968).

However Smuts's role in the revolutionary period of 1917 to 1923 is of importance not just because it represents the unique phenomenon of a colonial statesman playing a significant part in the European drama. (Australia's William Morris Hughes did have a notable role at Versailles, but it

was largely related to the pursuit of his country's aspirations for colonies). Smuts's interventions suggest the need for a rethink of the geo-spatial framework of those insurrectionary years. His approach to the European revolutions was crucially formed by his clashes with syndicalist revolutionaries in Johannesburg in 1913 to 1914. And conversely, his experiences in Europe were to shape the harshness with which he later dealt with working-class insurrection in South Africa in 1922. Within the British government, Smuts's attack on the Treaty of Versailles, was driven partly by his experiences in post-Second Anglo Boer War reconciliation in South Africa; but it was based above all on an acute fear of the consequences of the Russian Revolution. In his career, there was a continuous interaction between his experiences in South Africa and in Europe, in forming his decisions during his confrontations with the forces challenging existing social hierarchies.

Examining Smuts's role in this period helps us to see why the revolutionary epoch of 1917 to 1923 cannot be regarded only as a European-Russian phenomenon. The work of Erez Manela (2007) has rightly drawn attention to the connection between the Paris peace conference and the upsurge of anti-colonialism in Egypt, Korea, China and India. But it may be open to question whether he is correct to link this so exclusively to a 'Wilsonian Moment' and to play down to such a great extent the ripple of the 'Leninist Moment'. While Manela is right to emphasise the 1919 wave of nationalism in Asia and the Middle East, he perhaps underemphasises the short-term global impact of the Russian Revolution, which helped drive forward not only movements for self-determination, but also labour militancy, around the world. Smuts's particular trajectory highlights the extent to which both the leftist-revolutionary insurgency of the end of the war, and the politics of counter-revolution that met it, were transcontinental, extending well beyond Eurasia.

Smuts and the Syndicalists

Jan Christiaan ('Christian') Smuts, born in 1870, was the scion of a prosperous Afrikaner farming family in the western part of Britain's Cape Colony. He was an outstanding student at Victoria College in Stellenbosch and then won a scholarship to Cambridge, where he was the top law student in his year. He was initially attracted by Cecil Rhodes' Imperialism, but turned against him over Rhodes' attempt to overthrow the Boer Republic in the Transvaal. At the age of 28, Smuts was appointed Attorney General of the Transvaal by Paul Kruger. During the Second Anglo Boer War (1899–1902), he became an outstanding guerilla commander, leading a Boer force in a daring invasion of the Cape. Smuts was won back to the Imperial cause after the war by the conciliatory policies of Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal government towards the Boers. The British allowed white self-government in the Transvaal, and thereafter permitted movement towards a unified, settler-ruled South African state, which was achieved in 1910. Smuts's mentor, Louis Botha, became Prime Minister, with Smuts as his deputy, Minister of Defence and general right-hand man. With the outbreak of war, Smuts played a key part in Botha's defeat of an armed rebellion by German-aligned Afrikaners (the 1914 Rebellion against the Union government). Although the rebels were in general treated with leniency, the execution of one army officer, Jopie Fourie, was held by Smuts's Afrikaner Nationalist enemies as the symbol of his capitulation to British Imperialism (Davenport, 1963). Smuts went on to participate in the seizure of South West Africa. While, as British commander in German East Africa, he was unable to defeat Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck's troops, he did succeed during 1916 in clearing the German forces from the strategic northern half of the country. These achievements explain the enthusiasm with which he was greeted when he arrived in England for an Imperial conference in early 1917. He was then invited to join the Imperial War Cabinet. Smuts became the chief advocate of recasting the Empire as a British 'Commonwealth', in which the settler colonies would enjoy equal status with Britain under the Crown. (This did not of

course imply any racial egalitarianism; Smuts's racial politics in the South African context remained firmly paternalist in regard to the African majority) (Hancock, 1962, 1968).

Smuts underpinned his whole approach to politics with a sophisticated philosophical rationale drawn from the influence, during his Cambridge student years, of the late nineteenth century British Hegelians inspired by the writings of Thomas Hill Green (Mazower, 2009). In Smuts's 'Holist' vision, wise elites deny their own self-interest, and lead the greater community to seek the good of the whole. Human organisation rises over time towards higher forms and ever increasing unity-in-diversity. Small nations (South Africa) find a place within a greater unifying entity (the British Empire) (Dubow, 2008). This construction had strongly hostile implications for how attempts at revolutionary change were viewed. Human society would make progress over time, but that progress was necessarily slow and gradual. The British Empire had a special role in leading this evolution and thus its stability was essential. Social advance was about creating the potential for individual self-development and ethical conduct within a law-governed community. Even electoral democracy (let alone social democracy) was of limited importance.

Smuts's politics of counter-revolution moved from South Africa to Europe and back again. It had been significantly shaped by a massive confrontation in 1913 to 1914 with a syndicalist-led white worker trade union movement centred on the Witwatersrand gold mining area around Johannesburg. The bulk of this labour force were Cornish, English and Scottish miners and artisans, but they were joined by increasing numbers of newly urbanised Afrikaner miners and railway workers. Their agitation focused on conventional trade union demands, although their politics was underpinned, at least amongst the rank and file, by a fear that low-paid black workers would undercut their privileged position in the labour market. In 1913, these white unionists fell under the leadership of syndicalist militants, most of them of British, Irish and Australian artisan backgrounds. Some were influenced by the Industrial Workers of the World

(IWW) which had led a tramway strike in Johannesburg in 1911; others had connections to James Connolly's Glasgow-based Socialist Labour Party (Hyslop, 2007). (These activists tended to hold much more egalitarian racial political views than the generality of trade unionists, although they largely avoided this issue in their practical activities as strike leaders). Smuts, an adherent of strong free market views and a rural romantic, had little sympathy for the trade unionists, let alone for revolutionary militants. He was appalled when in early July 1913, the strikers unleashed a massive confrontation in central Johannesburg in which the railway station and the leading newspaper office were burned down, shots were exchanged with police and eventually twenty civilians were killed by British troops. In a direct encounter with strike leaders, Smuts and Botha were forced to make major concessions to them. But the humiliated Smuts planned his revenge. In January 1914 he deliberately precipitated another strike, mobilised the newly created Union Defence Force, carried out arrests and declared martial law. Hundreds were arrested, and nine leaders deported (Katz, 1976). In justifying his actions, Smuts (1914) described what he faced as a 'Syndicalist Conspiracy'. From this time he manifested a passionate loathing of labour radicalism, linked in his mind to the notion of 'anarchy' and civilisational collapse.

There can be little doubt that this affected the way in which Smuts approached the European Crisis. He was thoroughly committed to a British victory in the war. Yet he became, along with John Maynard Keynes, one of the two members of the British Empire delegation at Paris who were most critical of the Treaty and most anxious for the re-stabilisation of Germany. In part, this position arose from his great admiration for the way in which the British had reconciled with the Boers after 1902, which he saw as a model for transcending conflict. But it also came from a highly personal detestation of revolutionaries, whom he saw as the antithesis of the complex evolutionist teleology of 'holism' to which he subscribed, in which social order was paramount. Thus, while Smuts at one level was a liberal

humanitarian critic of the sufferings that the victorious powers were inflicting on Germany and central Europe, at another level his critique was one preoccupied with the need to build, in Germany and elsewhere, strong states that could crush revolution. His differences with the positions of the French and British governments arose precisely because he felt that they underestimated the danger that a harsh post-war settlement would risk of precipitating revolution in East and Central Europe.

Smuts and Revolution in Europe

In Britain, by 1917, the initial wave of loyalism that quelled the syndicalist militancy of the pre-war years had faded, and worker protest was becoming widespread again in the industrial heartlands. For David Lloyd George's government this was a vital threat to war production. Smuts received some new exposure to the syndicalists he so detested when, in October 1917, he was sent on a morale-boosting tour of the South Wales coal fields. This was part of the Lloyd George government's propaganda offensive, and Smuts was – perhaps rather oddly – seen as a winning card in consolidating the support of a region which had been a centre of the Syndicalist wave in the immediate pre-war years. South Wales was drenched with a quarter of a million copies of Smuts's speeches, standardised articles about his achievements were supplied to the local press and window displays about him in shop windows were arranged. In his speeches to largely working-class audiences in Cardiff and Tonypandy, he spoke about the virtues of freedom and self-government, which he assured his audience were characteristic of the British Empire, but not to be found in Germany (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966a:566-567). At the Empire Pavilion in Tonypandy, an aide noted, the audience 'consisted to some extent of pacifists, syndicalists and other enemies of the government' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966a:566). But Smuts at least temporarily won over his audience with his appeals to patriotism.

For Smuts, the Russian Revolution was an existential challenge to all he believed in. Moreover he was increasingly pessimistic about the prospect of a short-term defeat of Germany on the Western Front. This led him to form the view which would permeate his interventions within the British political leadership over the subsequent years; namely, that while German militarism still needed to be checked, the revolutionary threat was ultimately a far greater one. He became an advocate within the cabinet, of a settlement with Germany and Austria-Hungary that would head off the spread of revolution beyond Russia. In early December 1917, Smuts travelled to Geneva on behalf of the cabinet for a highly secret meeting with an intermediary of the Austrian government, Count Albert von Mensdorff-Pouilly-Dietrichstein, who had been the Empire's Ambassador to Britain at the time of the outbreak of war. Smuts tried to win over von Mensdorff to the idea of a separate peace, urging that the temporary abatement of the Russian military threat provided an opportunity for this. He also held out the prospect of British acceptance of the continued existence of the Austro-Hungarian polity, albeit in a reformed and federalised format (Lloyd George, 1936:21-35). But his attempt to drive a wedge between the Austrians and the Germans did not succeed.

Smuts's ability to take his distance from the policy of the government in which he served was to some extent enabled by his interaction with Liberal Party networks whose politics derived from Gladstonian anti-expansionism. The roots of this affiliation lay in the campaign against the British government's war policies in South Africa mounted by British radical liberals in 1899 to 1902. Smuts had become a particularly close friend of the leading campaigner against the British use of concentration camps, Emily Hobhouse, but there were many others. This was a creative tension: Smuts was generally more cautious than these friends and acquaintances, but they, rather than conservatives, were his interlocutors. One of them was the former Lord Chancellor and peace campaigner, Lord Loreburn. Loreburn wrote to Smuts on 20 January 1918 that the recent peace overtures from the German

side had been driven by fear of revolution, were sincere, and therefore needed to be followed up:

> What I fear is that if all this goes on as it has for three and a half years, the outcome, not only in Germany but also elsewhere, will be far beyond reform, however large, and will be what no wise man can desire, a sort of *novae tabulae* for the European race. It is not money or property I am thinking about, but a replacement of salutary customs and hitherto accepted axioms of moral and social principle by a wholesale revulsion which will take generations to work itself out, and on a scale so large that no nation can escape its contagion (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966a:593).

This very much echoed Smuts's own view. In a speech in early May 1918, Smuts, while resolute in the face of the German spring offensive, sounded a similar note. If the war continued for many years:

> the civilization we are out to save and to safeguard may be jeopardized itself. It may be that in the end you will have the universal bankruptcy of government, and you let loose the forces of revolution, which may engulf what we have so far built up in Europe, because civilization is not an indestructible entity (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966a:650).

He believed that the harshness of the Peace of Brest-Litovsk demonstrated the necessity to check Germany's military power. But it was clear from the speech that Smuts no longer thought an outright victory was possible, and that in any case, he thought that an excessively punitive peace was undesirable. Once Germany had been fought to a standstill, diplomacy and conciliation would be necessary to secure peace and create a new basis for stability in Europe. Were wisdom not to prevail: 'The war may drift on until all the Governments become bankrupt, until a bleeding people lies in agony and the forces of Bolshevism and revolution are let loose on society. Would that be in your interest?' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966a:653). Smuts however opposed private peace initiatives,

which he saw as disruptive of coherent policy: it was up to the government to lead the war effort and conclude a settlement.

With the coming of the Armistice, Smuts joined the Paris Peace Conference. The contributions of the Dominions (South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada), to the war effort had secured representation in their own right, rather than as part of the British delegation. This gave South Africa a new level of independence in international affairs. Smuts was eventually joined by Botha at the conference. Smuts significantly shaped the conference by producing the most coherent proposal for a future League of Nations. Woodrow Wilson's views on how the League should function were strongly formed by reading Smuts's pamphlet on the subject during his voyage to Europe, and by their subsequent conversations. Smuts was able to use the influence thus gained over Wilson to secure the American President's acquiescence to his proposal for a League of Nations 'mandate' system for the former German colonies. Wilson had initially been reluctant to agree to the handing out of these colonies to individual states. This threatened to derail Smuts's desire to obtain control of South West Africa. But by pushing the notion of 'trusteeship', Smuts managed to make the appropriation of the German territories acceptable to the USA delegation (Curry, 1961).

Smuts's immediate concern though, was with the revolutionary situation in Europe. He wrote to David Lloyd George on 26 March 1919, laying out his concerns. Essentially, he argued that the imposition of a brutal peace on Germany would open the way for the Bolsheviks:

> I am seriously afraid that the peace to which we are working is an impossible peace, conceived on a wrong basis; that it will not be accepted by Germany, and even if accepted, that it will prove unstable, and only serve to promote the anarchy which is rapidly overtaking Europe (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:83).

Reconsolidating Germany, he explained to the Prime Minister, was essential:

1. We cannot destroy Germany without destroying Europe.
2. We cannot save Europe without the co-operation of Germany (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:84).

He warned that: 'The Bolshevists will reap what we have sowed'. Especially, he saw a strong German army as an essential bulwark against both internal revolution and Soviet Russia: 'The German army is to be restricted to 100 000 men, who will have to maintain internal order and stem the Bolshevist wave from the East!' He viewed this in the context of the Nationalist insurrection in Ireland, pointing out that the British had required 100 000 troops to maintain control there, in a country of only four to five million inhabitants, compared to Germany's 70 million. This reduction of the German military to a minimal level was 'calculated to hand Germany over to anarchy at the hands of the Spartacists and Bolshevists' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:84). Smuts believed that the proposed handing over of the Danzig area to Poland and Alsace-Lorraine and the Saar to France was unwise: 'the Germans ... simply will not accept such terms ... for the future there is the legacy of revenge' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:85). Neither Poland nor the future 'Bohemia' (Czechoslovakia) would be stable without German 'good will and assistance'. Smuts believed that the Allied leadership had missed the opportunity to consolidate a 'favourable' regime under Károlyi in Hungary, by allowing Romania and Serbia to be 'placated' with Hungarian territory. In sum, Smuts's view was that Germany needed to be enabled to rebuild itself and the Allied leadership should be less concerned with satisfying the emergent small states of Eastern Europe. While heavy reparations could fairly be asked from Germany, the Allies should 'avoid all appearance of dismembering her or subjecting her to indefinite economic servitude and pauperism, and make her join the League of Nations from the beginning' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:87). Characteristically, he

invoked the generosity of Campbell-Bannerman's conciliation policy in South Africa.

The Communist seizure of power in Hungary intensified Smuts's sense that a reconciliatory settlement with Germany was necessary to stem the revolutionary tide. He wrote to his confidante, the feminist historian Alice Clark that 'unless a really just and fair peace is made with Germany, you may find 300 million Russians and Germans and Hungarians banded together in one wild Bolshevist onslaught on what we call civilization' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:90).

To Vienna and Budapest

While it might be speculated that Lloyd George sent Smuts to Budapest to get the opinionated South African out of the way, it is more likely that the Prime Minister took the mission seriously, given the need for a decision on possible military intervention in Hungary. Certainly Smuts himself felt that the Prime Minister was relying on him more than ever, especially as Lloyd George found himself increasingly isolated by his loss of his support amongst British liberals. Smuts took with him his personal aide-de-camp, the British-born Ernest Frederick C. Lane, and two senior Foreign Office officials, the brilliant A.W. Allen Leeper and the sophisticated Harold Nicolson, as well as other advisers and support staff. Nicolson knew Smuts already and was liked by him – Smuts had insisted on his coming along, even though the Foreign Office had wanted to keep Nicolson in Paris. Nicolson was a considerable literary figure in his time, although today likely to be better known for the fact that his wife, Vita Sackville-West was the lover of the writer Virginia Woolf (Nicolson, 1973).

On Wednesday 2 April 1919, after passing through Basel, Smuts, Leeper and Nicolson had a private discussion. They had the impression that although the ostensible purpose of the journey was for them to create an armistice line between the Hungarian insurrectionaries and the Romanians, the actual purpose was to seek to use Béla Kun as a conduit through whom the Allies could establish contact with the

Bolshevik government in Moscow. Leeper and Nicolson felt that Smuts was keeping his options open, willing to leave this tricky part of the agenda to the bureaucrats, in order to be able to disentangle himself if matters went awry (Nicolson, 1933:293). It was not for nothing that Smuts was known amongst his fellow Afrikaners as '*Slim* Jannie' a term implying a combination of slyness and cleverness, which evokes simultaneous admiration and distrust. The officials dreaded a repetition of the 'Prinkipo muddle' an abortive attempt initiated by Woodrow Wilson for a discussion with the Bolsheviks on the island in the Sea of Marmara. As the train passed through Austria, Nicolson noted the grim conditions and the 'pinched and yellow' faces of the population. At a stop in Vienna, Nicolson was struck by the rubbish in the streets, the uncut grass, broken and boarded-up windows and 'dejected and ill-dressed' people (Nicolson, 1966:293-4). Lane too was appalled by the poverty the party saw on the journey (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:109). The head of the Military Mission there, Sir Thomas Cunninghame, took the delegation for an elaborate meal at the famous Café Sacher. Smuts was furious, calling this a 'gross error in taste' (Nicolson, 1933:294). There is no doubt that Smuts was strongly affected by the suffering he witnessed, which evoked for him the years of the Second Anglo Boer War.

Nicolson went off to the Hungarian delegation office, where he persuaded the revolutionary official in charge, a Dr Alexis Bolgar, a Jewish Galician who had been a professor and newspaper editor in the USA, to make contact with Budapest and arrange for the delegation to be received (Nicolson, 1933:296). Given the chaotic state of the disintegrating Empire, the delegation had to turn to a private company, to arrange a train. Late that evening they arrived at the station, accompanied by Bolgar and his secretary. Early in the morning of 4 April, the train reached Budapest. Along the platform was a line of troops with red armbands and fixed bayonets. After breakfast, the delegation strolled up and down next to the train. Kun arrived with his entourage (Nicolson, 1933:293-296). Nicolson reacted to the Hungarians in predictably

hostile terms; Kun was 'a little man of about 30: puffy white face and loose wet lips: shaven head: impression of red hair: shifty suspicious eyes: he has the face of a sulky and uncertain criminal' (Nicolson, 1933:298). Lane viewed the revolutionary leader in unabashedly anti-Semitic terms: 'Béla Kun is a Jew of most unprepossessing looks, and his Jewish companions were no more attractive than their leader' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:109). There is no indication that Smuts shared these views; indeed over his career as a whole he had strong relationships with the South African Jewish community and the Zionist movement. But these statements exemplify both the prevalence of anti-Semitism amongst the British elite of the time, and how that anti-Semitism easily connected to a visceral fear of revolution. Lane went straight on from his description of the Kun delegation's looks to excoriate the utopianism of the Communists.

Smuts held a private discussion in his compartment with Kun and Bolgar (Nicolson, 1933:298). By Smuts's subsequent account to Nicolson, Kun came across as wanting to make a deal with the Allies, but was afraid that if he did so, the Nationalist sentiment which he had harnessed to his revolutionary cause might evaporate. Kun was heavily reliant on officers of the old Austro-Hungarian army for his strength, and felt that if he weakened his position, they might desert him. He proposed a conference with the Allies at Vienna or Prague. Smuts countered with a proposal for a meeting at Paris (Nicholson, 1933:299-300). Kun emerged from his discussion with Smuts, and Nicolson escorted the revolutionary leader to the end of the platform. Nicolson noted contemptuously that the Red Guards did not salute Kun, and one asked the leader for a light for his cigarette (Nicolson, 1933:299). Kun had arranged a splendid lunch for the visitors at the city's leading restaurant, the Hungaria, hoping, in Nicolson's view, to advertise the event as de facto recognition of his government by France and Britain. But the suspicious Smuts refused to allow the delegation to leave the train (Nicolson, 1933:299). At mid-afternoon Kun returned, and Smuts and Nicolson met with him in a compartment. Kun undertook to consult

his cabinet about the proposals that had been made. Later, Kun returned, and Nicolson induced him to sign a document releasing all British citizens who had been imprisoned. Nicolson thought that 'Kun does not strike me as a man who enjoys the fruits of office. He sat there hunched, sulky suspicious and frightened,' Smuts, in Nicolson's view, 'talks to him as if he were the Duke of Abercorn: friendly, courteous but not a touch of surrender of his own tremendous dignity' (Nicolson, 1933:300).

Members of the delegation talked with a British journalist and the Spanish and Swiss consuls, all of whom seem to have emphasised the weakness of the regime (Nicolson, 1933:300-302). To what extent this fed into their subsequent evaluation of the situation is not clear.

On Saturday 5 April, Kun appeared at the train. Smuts gave him a draft for an agreement providing for the occupation by the great powers of a neutral zone between the Hungarians and the Romanians. In exchange, the powers would raise the blockade which had been imposed on Hungary. Nicolson's impression was that Kun desired to accept this proposal because it would imply international recognition of his regime, which he craved. But he said that he had to consult his cabinet, which Nicolson read as him saying that he had to consult the Bolshevik leadership. Kun said he would return by 7 pm and Smuts put on the pressure by saying that the train would leave at 7.15. At 7.00 Kun and his entourage arrived at the station. In the 'half-lit dining-car', the delegations met. Smuts was handed a piece of paper. In it the Hungarians accepted the earlier proposal, but added the condition that the Romanians should retreat beyond the Maros River. Smuts read it twice, gave it to Nicolson to look at, then passed it back to Kun. Smuts then said: 'No gentlemen, this is not a note which I can accept. There must be no reservations'. He spoke, advocating unconditional acceptance of the original offer. The Hungarians were puzzled; they seemed to be hoping for further negotiations, but Smuts closed off the possibility. He said, 'Well Gentlemen, I must wish you goodbye', and courteously escorted them to the platform. While the Hungarians were

still waiting on the platform, Smuts nodded to his aide and the train moved out, as Smuts saluted the commissars. As the train headed west, over a dinner of rations Smuts reminisced about the veldt 'a ring of deep homesickness in his voice' (Nicolson, 1933:302-304).

It seems that Smuts had already concluded, to give Nicolson's (1933:304) summary of his position, that 'Kun is of no importance or seriousness and that he is not capable of giving effect to the treaty'. Smuts had apparently decided that the revolutionary government could not sustain itself and could be left to the mercies of the Romanian army. Nicolson too thought that 'Béla Kun and Hungarian Bolshevism is not a serious menace and cannot last'. He noted that Smuts had refrained from using Kun as a way of contacting the Bolsheviks. Similarly, the far less astute Lane also thought that the Kun government was too weak to survive; they 'did not carry out any of the terrorisms which had made it possible for the Russian Government to carry out its ideas' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:109). While like Nicolson, he observed the Red Guards coercing 'presents' out of shopkeepers, he conceded that '[b]eyond this form of blackmail terrorism had not yet started' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:110). It is likely that Smuts's assessment of the situation was important in the subsequent decision of Lloyd George and the other leaders at Paris to permit the Romanian military advance into Hungary. When the Romanians did eventually capture Budapest in August, they carried out ruthless mass executions of the defeated revolutionaries. Though Smuts may have flinched from this had he been confronted over it; it was the logical outcome of his policy decisions.

Against the Treaty of Versailles

Back in Paris, Smuts became frustrated with the Treaty proposals, feeling let down by Wilson and increasingly angry at the Allied leaders' failure to recognise the danger of revolution that a harsh peace would bring. By the second half of May, Smuts was seriously considering refusing South

Africa's agreement to the treaty. In a scathing memorandum to Lloyd George, he objected to the provisions for extended occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and of the Saar, the amounts involved in the reparations clauses, the extent of the adjustment of Germany's territories in the east, the extent of reduction of military forces and other, more minor, provisions (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:183-189). On such questions he found common ground with another member of the British Empire delegation, John Maynard Keynes.

After ultimately deciding to sign the Versailles Treaty, Smuts issued a press statement. He had put his name to it 'not because I consider it a satisfactory document but because it is imperatively necessary to close the war'. He objected to the territorial, economic and political provisions. But beyond that his criticism based on the revolutionary threat:

> We witness the collapse of the whole political and economic fabric of Central and Eastern Europe. Unemployment, starvation, anarchy, war, disease, despair, stalk through the land. Unless the victors can effectively extend a helping hand to the defeated and broken peoples, a large part of Europe is threatened with exhaustion and decay. Russia has already walked into the night, and the risk that the rest may follow is grave indeed (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:258).

With the conference at an end, Smuts prepared to return to South Africa. On leaving England, he made a full-throated case of support for the newly created Weimar Republic; 'We have today in Germany a moderate Republic' which deserved British support. Chancellor Friedrich Ebert's leadership had 'done its best to prevent anarchy on the one hand and military reaction on the other' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:269). For Smuts, Ebert was the representative of 'European order against the growing forces of anarchy'. He deserved British backing and encouragement: 'Do not let us deal with Ebert as we dealt with Kerensky and Karolyi – with results beyond recall today' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966b:269). By now he had concluded that the condition of Russia was one of 'national pathology' and irredeemable. This led him to

conclude that outside intervention would not prevail. But by backing Ebert against the revolutionaries, Germany, and thus central Europe, could be saved.

'Revolution' in South Africa

Within a few days of Smuts's return to South Africa, Botha died, and Smuts assumed the Prime Ministership. The country was undergoing dramatic social changes. The war years had brought about a surge of import-substituting industrialisation on the Witwatersrand. Johannesburg had become a very substantial manufacturing centre. At the same time the urbanisation of both African and Afrikaner rural people had speeded up. Wartime inflation hit the country hard. All this fed into a significant political radicalisation. Strikes by both black and white workers surged. A group of young radicals were challenging the gradualist and Imperial-loyalist leaders of the Native Congress (later the African National Congress). A radical black populist movement appeared in 1919 in the form of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), influenced by both Garveyism and the Industrial Workers of the World. The segregationist, but anti-capitalist South African Labour Party (SALP) was popular amongst white voters. The syndicalist International Socialist League (ISL), a movement of primarily British immigrant skilled workers and Jewish activists, had emerged out of a split in the SALP (van der Walt, 1999, 2007; Hyslop 2016). The ISL both supported attempts to build black unions and had a number of members who were important in white unions. In 1921 the ISL was the major component in the formation of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). The organisation was small and very predominantly white, but it had a disproportionate degree of influence.

It would be wrong to say that Smuts was obsessed with these threats: white power and capitalist dominance probably seemed far from imperilled in South Africa in 1919. But he showed himself willing to act fiercely against any perceived danger. His government carried out the brutal destruction of

a Garveyite-influenced African millenarian movement in the Bulhoek Massacre of 1921 (Edgar, 1982, 1988). It also launched a vicious campaign, including the use of aerial bombardment, against a minor rising in South West Africa in the next year (Freislich, 1964).

In early 1922 Prime Minister Smuts was to confront a mass white mine worker strike on the Witwatersrand. Although largely concerned with the protection of the privileged position of white workers, it was chiefly led by British-born syndicalist militants and members of the newly formed Communist Party. The inherently rather tame SALP was sidelined. The strikers, a large proportion of them Afrikaners, formed armed 'Commandos' evoking the military units of the Second Anglo Boer War and received training from the rather numerous World War I veterans in their ranks. Rather than attempt to defuse the situation, Smuts sought confrontation. He saw it as necessary first to expose the nature of the threat to public view, and then to crush it. As he explained his position afterwards: 'If there are revolutionary forces brewing in the country, let the country see it, let us even at the risk, the very serious risk of a couple of days of revolution, delay the declaration of martial law and let the situation develop' (van der Poel, 1973:128). He unleashed the full force of the army against the strikers, including the use of bomber planes and artillery. In intense fighting along the Witwatersrand and in central Johannesburg, well over two hundred civilians and defence force personnel were killed before Smuts destroyed the strike (Krikler, 2005). The strike was accompanied by some intense racial violence against black workers, although this was not approved of by the movement's leaders. This did not cause the Communist International to put any distance between it and the Rand Revolt. Strike leader Bill Andrews was subsequently elected to the executive committee of the Comintern (Cope, 1944). Smuts himself was convinced that the Communists were at the heart of the strike. The (in reality chaotic) events of 1922 were, for him, part of the Bolshevik onslaught, and in his own eyes, his actions were fully justified.

Thus Smuts's experiences in war-torn Europe reinforced his ruthlessness in dealing with issues in South Africa.

Smuts's account of the rising, when he spoke about it afterwards in parliament, was that it was unequivocally, a revolution, rooted in the unreliability of subaltern white people and the direct intervention of the international Communist movement: 'We have on the Rand, in addition to some of the best people in South Africa, a fairly large percentage of people there who are of a very dangerous class' (van der Poel, 1973:121). A portion of these were South African poor white people: who, 'owing to social conditions, owing to land conditions, gravitated into the town. People without calling or education, people who easily fall prey to any mischievous movement which may be afloat....' (van der Poel, 1973:121). At this point Smuts evoked the spectre of foreign, and implicitly, East European, revolutionaries:

> a proportion of the population on the Rand is also recruited from the less developed countries of the world, and people come from abroad with ideas, with social ideas of government, which are opposed to all the traditions of South Africa ... and you have another small number of people who are advanced Communists, international Communists, who preach the most dangerous doctrines for a class of that kind (van der Poel, 1973:121).

Smuts then moved to give the South African Labour Party the opening they needed, by commending the 'ordinary working class', whom he portrayed as politically middle-of-the-road skilled workers, and saying that Labour Party members had not taken part in the strike. This latter assertion was certainly not true, but it gave the party the space they required to put some distance between themselves and the Communists. He then turned his attention to the Afrikaner Nationalist members, highlighting the role of their supporters in the upheaval. The Communists had exploited the feeling created by the Nationalists: 'a spirit of lawlessness which the Communists teach these people from day to day is reinforced most dangerously by the doctrines which they pick up from

their own party. The Nationalist leaders say 'no violence'. But the international Communists do not say that. They say 'we want violent subversion from the ordinary state'' (van der Poel, 1973:121). Ultimately, Smuts saw the Rand Revolt as another event in the civilisational battle he had been fighting in Europe: 'As in Russia' he wrote to Alice Clark 'so elsewhere, the danger is that in a very short time the slow results of progress may be undone' (van der Poel, 1973:115).

Germany Again

Smuts continued to be a staunch advocate of giving Germany relief from reparations payments. But he feared that it would be too late and that the spiral of violence and potential revolution was unstoppable. Only the British Empire appeared to him as a bastion of stability, and then only partially. In the second half of 1923, Smuts was preoccupied with the critical situation in Germany around the default on reparations payments and the subsequent French occupation of the Ruhr. In a letter to Winston Churchill, Smuts wrote: 'With Germany crumbling, and Europe shooting Niagara, I see but a bleak prospect before the world. Even the British Empire will feel the effects for many a day' (van der Poel, 1973:180). 'Shooting Niagara' was a reference to Thomas Carlyle's famous polemic against social and cultural decline and insurgent democracy. Smuts placed primary blame for the situation on the intransigence of the French government and wanted to see the British government be more active. In September, Smuts sailed again for England on state business. On arrival in London, he cabled his friend, the Wall Street financier and political *eminence grise* Bernard Baruch, calling for a 'Great gesture by the United States' in the affair. He wrote that 'Without moral and political support of the United States it is doubtful whether there is sufficient strength left in Europe to save herself' (van der Poel, 1973:186). Smuts also corresponded with Keynes on a possible formula for the reparations question (van der Poel, 1973:191-192). There was some talk of the British government sending Smuts to Europe, but the lackadaisical Stanley Baldwin was not one for such a bold stroke. Smuts, with the clear aim of

positioning himself within the debate, gave a public speech to the South Africa Club in London, roundly denouncing the Ruhr occupation. He received a flood of congratulatory messages from highly placed figures in Britain. He also received a letter from Chancellor Gustav Stresemann, thanking him for his understanding of the German situation, and expressing hope that a productive conference could be convened (van der Poel, 1973:209-210). But whether his lobbying had any material effect is difficult to say. Smuts replied to Stresemann, urging him that if he could 'keep Germany going' public opinion in the British world and the United States would come around to a sympathetic position (van der Poel, 1973:216).

Smuts's deep hostility to even mildly leftist forces in Europe continued. The coming to power of Ramsay Macdonald's Labour government in early 1924 was seen by him as an evil portent of future success by the South African Labour Party. He complained that 'The Labour government in England has done us much harm: They already sit in the seats of the mighty' (van der Poel, 1973:224). He was particularly angered at Labour's retreat from the previous pro-Imperial trade policy of the Baldwin government.

Ireland

A final dimension of the European post-war crisis that engaged Smuts was the situation in Ireland. Smuts had long observed the growing conflict there and saw Ireland as a field in which he might make another contribution to stabilising Europe. At the time of his arrival in England in 1917, the British Government was having to cope with the aftermath of its bloody repression of the 1916 Easter Rising. The British over-reaction had swung public sympathy in Ireland towards the previously somewhat isolated *Sinn Féin*, and considerable security resources were being allocated to holding down dissent. But though Lenin and a small number of Irish leftists could see these events part of the world revolution, Smuts had another view. The Irish Nationalists were not the objects of the aversion he felt towards European revolutionaries

in general. The fact that there had been considerable Irish sympathy for the Boer cause may have been a factor here: John MacBride, the martyr of 1916, had led a military contingent fighting for the Boers, and Arthur Griffith, the leader of *Sinn Féin,* had lived in the Transvaal and later organised solidarity with the Boers from Dublin from 1899 to 1902. Moreover, the lack of any very radical social programme on the part of the insurrectionaries in Ireland made them appear relatively unthreatening to Smuts. Smuts saw the Irish as a small nation with genuine historic grievances, like the Boers, and believed that the conciliation was possible on the model of the post-Second Anglo Boer War settlement in South Africa. In 1918, Smuts had strongly opposed Lloyd George's attempt to impose conscription in Ireland. In May 1921, Smuts returned to London for a conference of the Dominions. By now the crisis in Ireland was at a peak. The War of Independence was inching towards a close, but the incipient split between the followers of Michael Collins and those of Éamon de Valera was emerging. Smuts was encouraged to intervene as a mediator by a number of Irish Nationalists. He successfully engineered the insertion of a conciliatory declaration towards the Nationalists into King George V's opening speech to the Ulster parliament. With the support of Prime Minister Lloyd George and the King himself, Smuts accepted an invitation to go to Dublin to meet with de Valera. The meeting took place on 5 July; Arthur Griffith was also present. Smuts assured the Irish delegation that he did not come as a representative of the British government, but as a 'friend who had passed through similar circumstances.' He told the delegation of the British desire for peace and conciliation. He urged de Valera to accept the reality of partition and believed that he had made some progress (van der Poel, 1973:95-98). But Smuts was unable to break through de Valera's distrust of the British intentions. Before returning to South Africa Smuts wrote to de Valera urging a gradualist path and invoking once more the post-Second Anglo Boer War conciliation as an example to emulate, but to no avail (van der Poel, 1973:100-105).

Conclusion

In 1924, Smuts lost a general election in South Africa and commenced a very long period in the political wilderness. He appears in very different guises to those who have written about his role in the post-World War I years. To admirers, he was the far-sighted and humane statesman who foresaw the disastrous consequences of the Peace of Versailles (Lentin, 2010). And indeed, the attempts of some historians in recent years to rehabilitate the Peace (Macmillan 2003) remain highly unconvincing. The idea that the peacemakers could not foresee the consequences of what they were doing is laughable; Smuts, in his writings and speeches of the time, identified many of the problems. On the other hand, Smuts's detractors – now the vast majority of South African historians – largely ignore his international statesmanship, and, reasonably enough, denounce him for his racism and his employment of military force against opponents at home. This chapter, however, suggests that these two, 'statesmanlike' and 'brutal' aspects of Jan Smuts were joined by the fear of revolution. His desire for a humane settlement to end the war was driven not only by empathy with the suffering of the peoples of central and eastern Europe, but by an intense commitment to creating governments that could crush the threat from the radical left. His willingness to act with violence against both black and white dissidents at home was informed by a view of a society as best led by wise and paternalistic elites, and an intense hostility to popular mobilisation. For Smuts, the priority was always social order – and his actions to defend it in the face of revolutionary times had the same basis, in Europe and in South Africa.

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3. The Making of a Myth: General Smuts and the Miners of South Wales

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The visit of General Smuts to South Wales in October 1917 is widely referenced in many biographies, and histories of his exploits, with the intention of illustrating his powers of persuasion and immense popularity in Great Britain during his time in the Imperial War Cabinet. The references are, however, factually incorrect and misleading, based upon apocryphal accounts, which often suffer from a good deal of poetic license, only loosely based upon the available evidence. One may call it an emblematic myth, shrouded in mystery and almost impervious to contrary evidence. In this chapter, I will first give a brief account of the caricature that is invariably presented, albeit in differing degrees of detail. I will then give the broader context against which Smuts's visit to South Wales has to be placed and try to give an assessment of the respects in which it may be claimed that the visit was a success.

In essence, the mythical story begins by pointing out General Smuts's remarkable negotiating skills, evidence of which was his resolution of a strike by policemen in London, in early 1917, and, with George Nicolle Barnes, a fellow member of the Imperial War Cabinet and Leader of the Labour Party, he settled a strike of 5 000 munition engineers in Coventry (Crafford, 1943:129). In the meantime, trouble was brewing in the South Wales coalfields, fomented by organised anti-war miners, 'trouble mongers' and pacifist agitators (Smuts, 1952:202). The striking miners were in no mood for compromise and threatened to jeopardise the war effort (Crafford, 1943:129). The strike would diminish even further the one-week coal reserve of the navy, endangering

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its capacity to keep the fleet at sea; preventing reinforcements from being shipped to France; and putting food supplies at risk (Armstrong, 1937:293). David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, who himself hailed from Wales, immediately despatched Smuts to the valleys of South Wales to placate the miners (Barbour, 2019:362). Smuts to the rescue as the 'only sure mediator' (Joseph, 1970:124).

Before setting off from Cardiff to Tonypandy where he was to address the striking miners, he received the keys to the city, and an honorary degree from Cardiff University. The motorcade wound its way up the Rhondda Valley, through the hostile 'striking mob' (Katz, 2022:227). Armstrong indulges in a good deal of imaginative detail when he describes the miners as a seething angry mob, wearing grey cloth caps, expecting a black South African, and instead finding themselves faced by a diminutive white-faced general (Armstrong, 1937:294).

Remembering that Lloyd George had told him the Welsh were a nation of singers, Smuts entreated his audience to demonstrate their vocal prowess. At first, rather surprised by the request, there was silence, then a lone voice, 'a ruddy faced miner' in the crowd (Joseph, 1970:124) began singing *Land of My Fathers* (Katz, 2022:227), the Welsh national anthem: 'then with deep fervour the rest of the throng joined in' (Steyn, 2015:87). Smuts had reduced them to emotional quivering wrecks (Armstrong, 1937:295). Smuts had performed a miracle, and the striking miners were back at work the next day (Katz, 2022:227). Crafford and Smuts's son embellish this by suggesting that when General Smuts attended a Cabinet meeting the following day his colleagues were amazed and asked him how he had done it, to which Smuts replied that it was news to him that the miners were back in work, and after pausing added, 'The *Land of My Fathers* saved us' (Crafford, 1943:130; Smuts, 1952:203).

Some of the facts are true; most of them are not, and the account sheds no light whatsoever on why Smuts was in South Wales; what the nature of the dispute was, to which his intervention was thought to be the answer. Indeed, wasn't it a

risk to send him to Tonypandy at all, the site only seven years earlier of a 'Red Revolution' of rioting miners who sacked and looted the town (Evans & Maddox, 1992). They were subdued by police and the military at the behest of Winston Churchill, who had sent nearly 1 000 Metropolitan Police, and several regiments of infantry in the winter of 1910 to Pontypridd, Tonypandy and Aberdare (Evans & Maddox, 1992:40-46). Smuts's reputation for the way he had treated striking South African gold miners in 1906 to 1907 and the notorious deportation of labour leaders in 1914 caused a furore, even in the conservative press, but especially in the more radical parts of Wales, such as Merthyr, an Independent Labour Party stronghold, with its own widely read newspaper, *The Pioneer*.

The name of General Smuts gained elevated national notoriety in Britain, when his solution to the gold mine strikes, and labour disputes of 1913 was to call out the army and to deport to Great Britain nine of the labour leaders, who were British citizens,[1] not by judicial procedures, which Smuts stated categorically would not succeed, but by acting ultra vires. After the fact in early February 1914, Smuts, the Minister of Defence, introduced into the Union Parliament, the 'Indemnity and Undesirables Special Deportation Bill' (Smuts, 1914:3). In his speech, which he published under the title of *The Syndicalist Conspiracy in South Africa: A Scathing Indictment* (1914), he justified the deportation of what he believed to be seditious, treasonable revolutionaries and 'dynamitists' who threatened the stability, safety and existence of South Africa. Because there had been no powers of authority currently in force to enable the Government to deport the troublemakers, nor was there any criminal law, other than high treason which was enacted in the seventeenth century, Smuts decided to take matters into his own hands. To indict them for what they had really done, Smuts exclaimed, 'you would never get a conviction' (Smuts, 1914:29). The Government has no alternative but 'to take the law into its own hands, and to deal

1 The deportees were J.T. Bain, A. Crawford, W. Livingston, D. McKerral, G. Mason, W.H. Morgan, H.J. Poutsma, R.B. Waterston and A. Watson.

with the situation under Martial Law as though it had this power and to look to Parliament to condone the action it had taken' (Smuts, 1914:28).

Although the Union Parliament legitimated his actions, Smuts provoked a huge backlash because of his high-handed disregard for the law. The South African Labour Party, formed in 1910, distanced itself from Generals Smuts and Botha, and in the Transvaal Provincial Council's general election of March 1914, Labour won a decisive victory at the expense of Smuts's Unionist Party (Crafford, 1943:94). F.E.T. Krause, elected to the Union House of Assembly in 1910, and confidant of Smuts and Botha, was in no doubt where to attribute blame for the defeat. The determining cause, he thought, was the deportation of men from South Africa without trial (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966: vol III, 168).

Even the friends of Smuts in England, including Margaret C. Gillet, the botanist, Emily Hobhouse, who exposed the British concentration camps during the Second Anglo Boer War, and Professor H.J. Wolstenholme, his former tutor of law at Cambridge, questioned his political judgement, pointing out to Smuts the bad press he had provoked in England. Gillet told Smuts that his actions made her feel that his political foundations were a little unstable, while Hobhouse reminded Smuts that he had considerably upset the Labour world, and wondered whether he would be able to bring Ramsey MacDonald, who was visiting South Africa, around to his point of view (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966:164, 174). Wolstenholme told Smuts that he had provided the press with a new sensation and the Labour Party with free publicity. He predicted that the deportees would be received in Britain as heroes and martyrs, and that Smuts's use of force and the suspension of the law may well provoke retaliation from the militants in South Africa (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966:166).

Wolstenholme was right about the British reception of the deportees, and the reaction of the press. The Tory press initially accepted the accounts that came out of South Africa, but when the deportees arrived in London, the press began

to reflect public sentiment. The Manchester *Daily Citizen* (20 March 1914), for example, reported the results of the Labour victory in the Transvaal Provincial General Election. It advised Smuts that if he wanted to hold back the Labour movement and take a further step down the road to tyranny that he would have to disenfranchise as well as deport the workers. The election was fought on the issue of the deportations, and Labour increased its representation from two to twenty-two elected members. They have succeeded, the report suggested, in killing off those parts of the Indemnity Bill that sought to exclude the Labour leaders permanently. It was now up to the British Government to censure Smuts and Botha and stop washing its hands of responsibility for the personal liberty of British citizens.

The Clarion newspaper, founded by the British socialist Robert Blatchford in 1891, protested that Smuts and Botha had committed a crime that struck at the very heart of British liberties. Three of the deportees, it was suggested, had been arrested before the declaration of the General Strike, and before the proclamation of martial law. If such actions were to go unchallenged by the British Government, democracy would be 'thrown back to the days of Norman Villenage[2] before the reign of King John' (27 February 1914).

When the nine deportees arrived in Britain, they were feted as heroes of the working class, and invited all over the country to address various affiliates of Labour at fundraising rallies in their support. On 27 February 1914, for example, they were welcomed with rapturous applause at a trade union gathering at the London Opera House, where both Ramsey McDonald, the current leader of the Labour Party, and Keir Hardy, who had led the party from 1906 to 1908, condemned Smuts and Botha for their disgraceful reaction to the legitimate grievances aired by Labour, and for the inhumane treatment of the black people, whose working lives in the gold mines were

2 This term is first used in the fourteenth century to describe a form of tenure where the tenant is under an obligation to be at his master's bidding and do anything required. https://thelawdictionary.org/villenage/. Accessed 16/12/2022.

less than two years, with white people on average working 4.7 years before succumbing to the dread disease of silicosis. One of the deportees, Mr T.J. Bain, vehemently denied the charge made in the Union Parliament by Smuts, that he was part of a Syndicalist conspiracy, and 'dynamitist'. Towards the end, the suffragettes caused uproar when they interrupted the meeting demanding votes for women (*The Monmouth Guardian and Bargoed and Caerphilly Observer*, 6 March 1914:2.).

On Sunday 1 March, a huge rally, the largest seen in London, was organised in Hyde Park to greet the miners. The demonstrators marched in two enormous processions of imposing dimensions, one setting out from Cricklewood, and arrived in time for the speeches, the tail end of the second from the Embankment arrived after the rally was over. There were nine platforms - one for each of the deportees. The rally condemned the South African Government and called upon the British Government to withhold assent to the Indemnity Bill until the wrongs committed against the South African workers had been righted.

In Wales, Smuts's actions provoked varying degrees of dismay and disbelief. One of the themes that recurred throughout the meetings was how Smuts and Botha profited from the Second Anglo Boer War, and how it was precipitated by international capitalism. Five of the deportees, D. McKerral, W.H. Morgan, T.J. Bain, Archie Crawford[3] and H.J. Poutsma spoke at special gatherings held in their honour in the heartlands of the South Wales coalfield, and industrial belt. Botha's government, and Smuts, its minister of defence, were denigrated and vilified. Smuts was referred to as the Despicable Smuts, and his name became an object of ridicule, referring to the General as appropriately named, Smuts by name, Smuts by nature. Deportees relayed the injustices of South Africa, and the ruthlessness with which Smuts put down demonstrations and strikes by using the militia and armed police. The men met with enthusiastic welcomes at such places

3 Archie Crawford visited Wales in July, 1914 to speak at two events in Merthyr and a gathering in Carmarthenshire.

as Aberdare, Aberavon, Troedyrhiw, and Merthyr. At Aberdare on 18 March 1914, a mass meeting was held at the Market Hall. Dr H.J. Poutsma, general secretary of the Railway and Harbour Servants' Association of South Africa, and a medic tending to the wounds of both Boers and British in the Second Anglo Boer War, explained that the war was instigated by a small group of capitalists on the Rand, who sought the support of the British Government to further their ambitions for exploiting the gold mines. Poutsma contended that wars were always instigated by capitalists and he urged those present to refuse if they were called upon to bear arms. The Government of South Africa had sold-out to foreign capitalists on the Rand, who had precipitated the Jameson Raid, and the Second Anglo Boer War, and those men, he claimed, were still manipulating the South African government (*Aberdare Leader* 24 March 1914:5).[4] Keir Hardie, whose parliamentary constituency encompassed Aberdare, told the crowd that he had won his seat in 1900 as a pro-Boer, and reminded the workers that they had no responsibility for the war. Whatever war was fought, you could be certain that it was not for the cause of humanity.

At the top of the Rhondda Valley, only eighteen miles by road from Tonypandy, where Smuts spoke in 1917, was the heavily industrialised town of Merthyr Tydfil, with a population of 83 000, by far the largest in Wales, and a stronghold of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). It was the parliamentary seat of Kier Hardy, an opponent of the Second Anglo Boer War and founder of the Labour Party. He was its first leader from 1906 to 1908. Regular political meetings were held in Merthyr's largest venue, the Olympia Skating Rink (Eirug, 2018:82). Two of the South African deportees were invited to speak to a meeting of 3 000 people in Merthyr in April 1914. The meeting was reported in the local and national press. *The Pioneer*, owned by 800 Merthyr subscribers, with a circulation of 10 000 served to voice the political militancy of the ILP, which Hardie himself symbolised, and to support the rank and file of the South Wales Miners' Federation

4 Recent research has corroborated much of what Poutsma claimed. See van Onselen (2017).

whose members Smuts wished to persuade to vote against strike action in 1917. Dr Poutsma once again raised the issue of the Second Anglo Boer War, accusing both generals Smuts and Botha of profiting from it. While they opportunistically purchased lands and built grand houses on it, the poor Boer returning from the concentration camps overseas lost everything and were forced to work in the mines of the Rand in inhumane conditions.

Keir Hardy spoke briefly and reminded the audience that some of them, as patriots, would have been opposed to him in the election of 1900 when he stood as a pro-Boer, when he was accused of being a friend of every country but his own. Events had proved him right, and testified to what a terrible crime the Second Anglo Boer War was against Great Britain, against its honour, and as the current events showed against liberty. He begged the deportees to tell the workers of South Africa that the people of Merthyr were pledged to stand by them, and that if the British Government failed to act in future, as it did now, the workers of Merthyr had the power to strike with their South African comrades, 'and will tell the authorities here and there that Labour is no longer a down-trodden class, but the rising power in the world' (*Pioneer*, 2 May 1914).

By the time of Smuts's visit to South Wales, he had become a celebrated war hero because of the reported success of his campaigns in West and East Africa, and because of his prominence in the Imperial War Cabinet. In February 1916, for example, a widely syndicated photograph of Smuts, in formal top hat and tails, was published. It was announced that he is the first Boer to command a British Army outside South Africa (*Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 11 February 1916). Acceptance of such news may have been facilitated four months earlier when, following an attempt on his life in Johannesburg', a correspondent wrote that General Smuts was 'entirely English in sentiment, and a typical Cambridge man of the English Bar' (*East Anglian Daily Times*, 6 October 1915). In an article titled *General Smuts is Needed Here*, Winston Churchill wrote that Lloyd George should take full advantage of Smuts's experience and remarkable qualities, as demonstrated in East Africa,

and by the inspiring speeches he made around the country (Smuts, 1917b), by inviting him to join the Imperial War Cabinet (*Sunday Pictorial*, 22 April 1917). The suggestion was acted upon, and justified by Andrew Bonar Law, leader of the Conservative Party, and member of the coalition government, by arguing that the inclusion of Smuts strengthened the Imperial War Cabinet, adding that Smuts is 'in many ways the strongest personality and the most representative man of all' (*Sussex Daily News*, Wednesday, 20 June 1917). There was little dissension, except concern that Smuts may be allowed to influence domestic policy, which was swiftly allayed by Bonar Law in the House of Commons, in suggesting that Smuts himself had laid it down as a condition of his service that he would not intervene on questions of domestic policy (*Daily News*, London, 26 June 1917).

The Welsh language press praised Smuts for being one of the most skilful Field Marshalls in the war (*Seren Cymru,* 28 September 1917), whose prestige had rapidly grown, especially in the minds of those west of Offa's Dyke (*Y Brython*, 11 October 1917). He was the main protagonist, along with Lloyd George, of aerial defence and offence, and instrumental in the 1917 merger of the Army and Navy air services into The Royal Air Force (Dobbs, 1915:63). The *Leicester Evening Mail* went as far as to suggest that when the history of the war is written with candour it will become evident that Britain owes more to General Smuts in the last six months than to any other person in the Administration (8 October 1917). In syndicated articles, his visit to South Wales was widely reported. The *Newcastle Journal* and the *Shields Daily News*, for example, reported a week before the visit that he would receive a particularly warm welcome in South Wales as a representative of the 'great fighting leaders' of the Second Anglo Boer War, which made him 'specially attractive' to the miners (23 October 1917). Pro-Boer sentiment had been strong in the South Wales Valleys. The report remarked that his tireless efforts for the success of the Allies over Germany was of particular significance and the thousands of workers 'keenly interested in the general's fame will be able to hear his address'. A Welsh radical newspaper

supporting liberal and socialist viewpoints cautioned against putting too much faith in the jingoistic press, pointing out that during the Second Anglo Boer War when Smuts was the State Attorney for the Transvaal, the papers portrayed him as having a great many faults and no virtues. Was it the same man, it asked, who is now in the Imperial War Cabinet and whose excellences as a soldier and stateman are celebrated? The paper asked rhetorically: 'Was he a different man seventeen years ago?' (*Y Genedl*, 2 October 1917).

What was the problem to which Smuts was the answer? There was a widespread belief that a concerted effort was being made by pacifists of the 'MacDonald, Snowden and Fenner Brockway type'[5] to gain the support of the masses of South Wales miners in an attempt to bring the war to a halt by paralysing the coal mining industry.

The ILP was blamed for much of the intrigue and held responsible for packing local miners' lodges with 'young energetic men' whose extreme views influenced policy far in excess of their numerical numbers in the South Wales Miners' Federation (*The Mail*, 29 October 1917). There was undoubtedly a close correlation between anti-war activity and a strong presence of the Independent Labour Party, which opposed war on moral grounds. It did not officially declare its opposition to the war until 1916, but had, nevertheless, refused to take part in recruitment campaigns (Eirug, 2018:48-51). The South Wales Miners' Federation held several meetings in late 1915

5 Philip Snowden (1864-1937) was an Independent Labour Party spokesman on foreign affairs and prominent campaigner against the war. He was not a pacifist but was against conscription and for an early negotiated peace. He championed the cause of conscientious objectors, particularly in the South Wales industrial town of Port Talbot where the No Conscription Fellowship was particularly strong (Adams, 2016:179-81). Archibald Fenner Brockway (1888-1988) was an Independent Labour Party politician and anti-war activist. He instigated the No Conscription Fellowship in 1914 and was imprisoned for his refusal to be conscripted after his application for conscientious objection was denied.

and early 1916 at which it was resolved to oppose compulsory conscription due to be introduced in the Military Service Act of January 1916. James Winstone, its president, denounced the Act as gross folly which would endanger national unity. Opposition to conscription was so volatile that it was feared that the country's coalfields would grind to a halt, and that a General Election was imminent. On 12 January 1917 the South Wales Miners' Federation voted to 'down-tools' unless the Military Service Act was withdrawn. Its Executive was unanimous in its opposition, warning that conscription was the thin edge of the wedge to be used against the working classes. Only when the Asquith government made the concession that necessary industrial workers, including miners, would be exempt from conscription, did the South Wales Miners' Federation withdraw its threat of strike action, while continuing its opposition to conscription (Dobbs, 2015:68-9).

Anti-war activity was greatest in places such as Merthyr and Briton Ferry, where ILP membership was highest. Other bodies, such as The National Council for Conscription; the No-Conscription Fellowship; and Unofficial Reform Committee gained representation on the Council of the South Wales Miners' Federation and exercised influence on its decision to oppose conscription in the mines and to hold a ballot on the issue, contrary to the policy of the National Federation of Mine Workers.

South Wales, it was suggested, had been a 'storm-centre' of 'Pacifists intrigues' (*The Scotsman*, 6 November 1917). It was reported that 'the extremists have for the moment gained the upper hand' (*The Mail*, 19 October 1917). On 20 July 1917, for example, the South Wales Miners' Federation Council resolved to put on the agenda of a special conference on 2 August a resolution that the opinion of the organised labour movement of Great Britain should be conveyed to the 'labour movements of the belligerent Powers' to join with the British working class to take such action to compel their respective Governments to adopt a peace settlement (South Wales Miners' Federation Minutes, 1917).

The immediate fear was that pacifists might exercise a disproportionate influence on the impending vote by South Wales miners to 'down-tools' over the Government's Combing-Out Policy. At least 50 000 miners voluntarily enlisted in the early days of the war, and in order to safeguard production further recruitment was forbidden. When the Military Service Act of 1916 was passed it made all male citizens aged between 18 and 41, with certain exceptions, eligible for conscription until the end of the War. The mining industry was 'starred', giving exemption to indispensable workers. By 1917, however, there was an urgent need for further recruitment.

The issue of the 'Combing-Out' of miners for military service had been rumbling on for about nine months. The proposal was first put to a deputation of the Executive Committee of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain by Sir George Cave, Secretary of State for the Home Department on 1 February 1917. He explained that there was an urgent need for men to be enlisted from the non-essential and essential industries to counter a concerted enemy attack 'requiring defending ourselves by every means possible'. The most important class of miners to be called upon would be those who had entered the mines after 14 August 1915. He proposed that the Government needed about 20 000 men, from the one million men currently working in the mines, about half of whom were of military age (MFGB Minutes, 1917). The eventual proposal was 21 000 men, of which, 4 575 would come from the 200 000 South Wales miners. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) agreed on 21 April 1917 that enlistment of miners should first begin with men who had left other trades to work in the mines after the outbreak of war (*The Mail*, 29 October 1917). A conference of South Wales miners' delegates endorsed the decision (South Wales Miners' Minutes, 8 May 1917). The issue was considered again by MFGB in the summer of 1917, and it was resolved to assist the Government by agreeing that in addition to those joining the mines after the war began, 'Combing-Out' should be extended to unmarried Class A men from the age of 18 to 41.

The Special Conference of the SWMF of 1 and 2 August, at which the resolution to compel government to seek peace was passed, the anti-war lobby overwhelmingly rejected, by 236 votes to 25, the recommendation of the MFGB to accept the Government's 'Combing-Out' policy. It was then agreed to hold a ballot to determine whether miners would support strike action if the government imposed the policy. After considerable procrastination a Conference of South Wales miners' delegates rejected the decision to extend the 'Combing-Out' policy and resolved 'That we take no part in assisting in the recruitment of colliery workers for the army' (South Wales Miners' Minutes, Special Conference, 8 October 1917). The conference directed that a ballot vote be taken asking if the miners were in favour of 'down-tools' if the Government proceeded with its 'Combing-Out' scheme. It was resolved a few days later, to hold the ballot on 1 and 2 November. The decision to go ahead with the ballot was reaffirmed on the same day that Smuts arrived in Cardiff, 29 October, despite the receipt of the results of communications from district lodges and mass meetings of miners to cancel or postpone the ballot. The campaign was acrimonious with the pro-government press portraying the contest as one between unpatriotic German-loving pacifist shirkers who were physical and moral cowards on the one side, and principled, patriotic supporters of the war on the other (*Western Mail,* 9 October 1917).

Concern about pacifist and anti-war sentiment in South Wales was sufficiently strong to bring it to the attention of the Imperial War Cabinet at its meeting of 18 October 1917. Sir Edward Carson, Minister without Portfolio and leader of the Irish Unionist Party, reported that Sir George Riddell, a newspaper proprietor and confidant of Lloyd George, had indicated that the situation in the South Wales Coalfield was very serious because of the organised resistance to the 'Combing-Out' policy of the government. The mines were one of the last remaining big pools for recruitment, and of paramount importance to the government. The Imperial War Cabinet was informed that some patriotic leaders in South

Wales, doing their best to resist syndicalist and pacifist influences, had requested that General Smuts address a War Aims meeting. Smuts was willing to address a meeting, initially scheduled at Mountain Ash, at an early date (National Archives, War Cabinet Minutes, 18 October 1917: CAB 23/4/26)

The National War Aims Committee was established as a parliamentary cross-party propaganda organisation in July of 1917, at the instigation of Prime Minister Lloyd George, around the time of Smuts's arrival in Britain. Its inception was in response to a widespread belief that pacifist propaganda was being fomented in a number of industrial towns throughout Britain, by a very small group of agitators (Monger, 2014). The Government, in its view, had a role to play in 'steadying and stiffening, if necessary, the morale of the workers at home' (*HC Deb 13 November 1917 vol 99 cc285-347* 285). For the remainder of the war the National War Aims Committee held thousands of meetings, distributed over one hundred million publications, of which Smuts's speech at Tonypandy, in an expanded version, was one. The publications of the Committee delivered a wide-ranging patriotic message, responsive to the changing environment of the war (Monger, 2014:1).

The National War Aims Committee had clearly defined objectives. First, to resist influences of an insidious and unpatriotic character. Second, to appraise the country of the War Aims of the British Empire and its Allies. And, third, to give support to the government in prosecuting the war (*HC Deb 13 November 1917 vol 99 cc285-347* 285). The National War Aims Committee was responsible for producing domestic propaganda, parallel with C.F.G. Masterman's 'War Propaganda Bureau' with its headquarters in Wellington House. The War Propaganda Bureau was responsible for most external propaganda.[6]

6 Masterman had known Smuts at Cambridge and was responsible for commissioning and donating his portrait to the National Portrait Gallery. The artist was Francis Dodd, one of Masterman's wartime artists at the Bureau.

Smuts was extensively used in 1917 as a key speaker for the National War Aims Committee, at whose invitation he spoke at numerous events around the country, and quite frequently had the freedom of the city honour bestowed upon him at the same time. For example, at Derby, Leicester, Sheffield, Glasgow and Cardiff during October and November alone. Smuts had been invited to speak at Tonypandy by the representatives of the National War Aims Committee in the Rhonda Valley (*The Mail,* 29 October 1917).

Despite Smuts's reputation as a strike-breaker, and scourge of the South African Labour movement, he was considered to have qualities that would appeal to patriotic sentiment. As a former enemy, turned immense Imperial exponent of the virtues of the Empire; the only representative of the Empire inside the War Cabinet with privileged access to knowledge; and an accomplished soldier who could empathise with those on the front line of combat, Smuts constituted a credible all-rounder with considerable skills of oratory.

An immense amount of groundwork was laid to ensure the success of the General's visit, and to gloss over the negative impression of the enduring image in the South Wales valleys of his South African anti-Labour policies and his use of troops against the miners. To reinforce the propaganda of Smuts as 'the Man of the Moment' following his conquest of German East Africa in 1917 (*The Graphic,* 12 May 1917), 250 000 copies of General Smuts's speeches were distributed; placards with his portrait placed in shop windows; and articles detailing his wartime exploits in seven journals, some of which were illustrated. For example, the editors of Cardiff daily newspapers wrote editorials, and around the Rhondda Valley the visit was advertised on hoardings.

Contemporaneous accounts of Smuts's visit to South Wales in 1917 are a considerable corrective to the emblematic account of the magnificent Smuts with which I opened this chapter, and which form the mythology endlessly repeated in books about Smuts.

The visit of General Smuts was organised with extreme precision. Little was left to chance. He had a tight schedule, arriving in Cardiff at 12:30, to be greeted by the Lord Mayor, Mr J. Stanfield, and transported to City Hall where a meeting of the Council would present Smuts with the keys to the city, followed by a civic luncheon. In receiving the freedom of the city he emphasised the parallels between Wales and South Africa, both 'small nations', at one time oppressed by the English. At the luncheon, Smuts gave a short speech of thanks emphasising that the threat to Italy was only the latest Autumn downturn, following from the crushing of Serbia in 1915, and Romania in 1916. He urged them not to be downhearted, adding that we are all doing our bit in what is 'probably the greatest drama in human history' (Smuts Papers, A1 Box 301/1, 13). At 3.15 Smuts was to be taken on a tour of Cardiff Docks, followed by a visit to the Mansion House, Richmond Road, the official residence of the Lord Mayor. At 5:15pm Smuts would travel by motor car through Whitchurch, Pontypridd, and Porth before arriving in Tonypandy. From Penygraig to Tonypandy the motorcade was to be led by two silver bands and the Voluntary Training Corps, as a guard of honour. He was to speak at the Empire, with a capacity of 3 000 people, on the subject of the War Aims, and later address an overflow meeting in Ebenezer Baptist Chapel. In all, he gave four formal speeches, two in Cardiff and two in Tonypandy, and a number of impromptu addresses as the motorcade stopped from time to time. After the meetings, Smuts was taken to The Garth, near Taff's Well, the home of Mr and Mrs W.P. Nicholas, who chaired the meeting in the Empire, for supper before returning to Cardiff for the 10:42 pm mail train to London (*Western Mail,* 29 October 1917, and *Rhondda Leader*, 3 November 1917).

It is certainly the case that crowds lined the streets of the Rhonddas from Penycraig to Tonypandy, not only for General Smuts, but also for Dr T.J. Macnamara, Secretary to the Admiralty and Right Hon. William Brace, Under Secretary to the Home Office. At Penycraig the motorcade was met by Major Sir John Curtis, Lord Bute, Mr W.P. Nicholas and thousands of spectators. The procession to Tonypandy was headed by

the Tonypandy Hibernian Band, as it wound its way through packed streets to the cheering of a vociferous crowd singing patriotic songs. The Empire theatre, where Smuts, Brace and Macnamara were to speak, had to open its doors early in order to prevent the crowd blocking the street outside. The *Rhondda Leader* described the greeting as a 'rousing reception', and reported Smuts as saying, 'that it has been one of the greatest demonstrations that he had seen in his life' (3 November 1917). Quite a different story from the often-repeated claim that the streets were lined with an angry seething mob of militant miners.

It is true that General Smuts requested to hear the Welsh sing, despite hearing them singing all along the procession, but it was a Welsh hymn for which he asked, not *Land of My Fathers* (*Gwlad fy Nhadau*). The hymn they sang at the Empire before the speeches were delivered, was *O Fryniau Caersalem* (From Caersalem Hills). In the overflow meeting, without request, two hymns were sung, to which Smuts exclaimed that he was reminded of Carlyle's description of the La Marseillaise sounding like a battle cry (Smuts papers, A1 Box 301/1, 15). When Smuts stood up to speak at the first of the two Tonypandy meetings he was given a 'most thrilling, rousing magnificent ovation' (*Rhondda Leader*, 3 November 1917). The three speakers, Brace, Macnamara and Smuts, were again enthusiastically received when they spoke at the overflow meeting at Ebenezer Chapel immediately after.

The Pioneer, predictably, had a very different view of the General's visit, describing the whole proceedings as a farce. It suggested that only a small number of miners were present, and the best seats were reserved for the select few who arrived at the last minute, while hundreds were left outside, unable to enter. The whole thing made a mockery of the idea that in prosecuting the war all class distinctions were to be put to one side. There were a few interruptions, but had it been an open meeting, it was suggested; the Rhondda miners would have made it clear to General Smuts what they thought of him and his treatment of their fellow workers in South Africa in sending the troops in against the gold miners on the Rand, and

his action in transporting nine labour leaders to London on the *Umgeni* in 1913 (3 November 1917).

The Speeches

Smuts gave four speeches which were all variations on the theme of the importance of small nations, their value and contribution to the war effort, and the threat posed by Germany to them. The war was not one of vengeance, nor for territory, but for the ideals of justice, freedom and equality. It was a war of good against evil, of conscience against the will to power. It was a moral crusade against the outrages against humanity that Germany has perpetrated. We must all stand firm and do our duty. In the main theatre of war the Allies have Germany in a vice, 'and we will hold him there until he disgorges that war map of his…' (Smuts papers, A1 Box 301/1, 13). He appealed to the patriotism of Wales as a nation, and of Welsh people who knew their duty when called upon in time of adversity. He first spoke at the ceremony conferring the Freedom of the City of Cardiff upon him, where he said he was honoured to receive such an accolade from one small people to a member of the smallest people in the British Empire (*The Times,* 30 October 1917). He was the youngest recipient to receive the freedom of the city.

He then spoke at the luncheon in his honour at the City Hall, Cardiff, followed by the major speech at Tonypandy delivered to 3 000 people, and repeated with significant variation, in an overflow meeting in Ebenezer Baptist Church, of 2 000. At Tonypandy he shared the platform with William Brace, a leading trade unionist and Labour minister, and T.J. Macnamara, financial secretary to the Admiralty.

The struggle of small nations for freedom was one of the central themes of his speeches. In order to demonstrate that he empathised with small nations who struggled against the biggest nation in the world, the English nation. He said that he knew that Wales had always stood firm for its separate existence against the English. The Welsh had stood up for their language, their national traditions and for everything

that makes a nation's soul (*The Leicester Daily Post,* 30 October 1917). Smuts characterised the Afrikaner resistance in the Second Anglo Boer War as a crusade for the freedom of a small people. We fought to the bitter end, he lamented, until every man, woman and child was either in the field or in concentration camps. Our liberty was lost, he said, but it was soon regained (Smuts, 1917a:1). That war had made the British people realise the fairness and considerable value of small nations, and that is the reason why, in all conscience they have embarked upon this great struggle for small nations. Smuts congratulated the Welsh on making a great contribution to the war, and for giving the country a Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, whose amazing energy constituted the soul of the Allied struggle (*Times,* 30 October 1917). In the speech to the overflow audience, in a more strident tone, he said the Welsh people had fought for almost a thousand years for their country's liberty against England, and occasionally beat her, 'and now when they have swallowed you a Welshman is ruling England (Smuts Papers, A1, box 301/1, 15). When the history of the war came to be written, he said, and due credit apportioned to every nation in the Empire, Wales would rank amongst the very highest (*The Leicester Daily Post,* 30 October 1917).

Speaking at the luncheon, Smuts had contended that the struggle was largely over the fate of mankind. It was not so much about fighting for the Empire, but for civilisation. Germany had crushed Serbia and Romania, and was now embarking upon an onslaught against Italy. Italy, however, need not fear because her Allies would stand by her. The war was fought not for material gain, 'but for the great issues of the ethical, moral and political bases of Western Society' (*The Times,* 30 October 1917). The war would determine whether the future would be built on freedom, or the 'will to power' and the 'will to force'. He was here alluding to the considerable literature by philosophers whose contribution to the war effort was to warn of the German militaristic psyche, to which, it was claimed, Germany's most prominent thinkers, such as Hegel, Nietzsche, and Treitschke, contributed (e.g. Barker, 1914; Dewey, 1914; Santayana, 1916; Muirhead, 1917).

At Tonypandy, Smuts told his audience that the ultimate issues of the war were the principles that the British Empire was built upon: liberty, constitutional government and freedom. In Germany, these principles were regarded as nonsense and citizens regarded as pawns of the state. The war was both moral and spiritual, and not about territories. It was a war between God and the Devil, and the Allies were engaged in a moral crusade, which Germany could not win because it was morally bankrupt, and because 'the invisible forces of the universe and the conscience of mankind' were on the side of the Allies (*The Times,* 30 October 1917).

Smuts appealed to the patriotism of the miners, both at the beginning and the end of his speech. He said that he had been overwhelmed by the warm reception he had received on the journey from Cardiff to Tonypandy. Smuts thanked God for what he had seen which was that the heart of Wales beats true. He assured his audience that his visit was not because he thought it necessary to address any great exhortation to the miners, but because he knew that they knew their duty and they would do it (Smuts, 1917a:2). He addressed them not as a representative of the British Government, but as a 'representative of the great Society of Nations that composes the British Empire', whose foundation, he reiterated, was liberty, constitutional government and freedom (Smuts, 1917:4). Smuts's strategy in his speech was to valorise the brave efforts of the soldiers, reminding the audience that he was one himself, in the main theatres of war, and to emphasise the righteousness of the cause. Despite occasional setbacks, and as dark as the night might be, the Allied Nations will never forsake their duty (Smuts, 1917a:12). Smuts maintained that there was no giving in until the world was established on a new basis. This would be a world in which there were no standing armies, in which young men would no longer be sacrificed to war, and all our powers would be devoted to economic development. A better England, Wales and Tonypandy could only be achieved by first gaining victory in the war, and as a result, small nations would be allowed to flourish on the basis of equality with large nations.

In conclusion, he thought it unnecessary to make an appeal to the audience to do their duty, because the mind of Tonypandy was as crystal clear as water to him. All our lives, he said, are of little consequence in the great scheme of things. We cannot take riches or our most heartfelt grievances when we go, but our legacy can be one of which our children are proud. He ended by reiterating that the war was a great moral and spiritual crusade. He exhorted the audience: 'Will you stand firm? Will you last it out? You will not give in, and I will tell you that, as sure as I stand here, victory is assured for the Allied cause and those great principles which we are fighting for' (Smuts, 1917a:14).

In contrast, William Brace cajoled the miners. He was far more confrontational in his message, telling the miners that their reputation in the country was at rock bottom, and the feeling against 'down-tools' was far greater than they imagined. He was direct in his approach, reminding the colliers in the audience that as members of a great commonwealth they occupied a privileged position, and with privilege comes responsibility. On the Western Front, he continued, their flesh and blood were laying down their lives to achieve the vision that General Smuts had depicted. Appealing to their conscience, he urged them to allow the soldiers to come back home before taking a ballot, reminding them that if they lived in Germany they would not even be allowed to talk about a ballot (*Pioneer,* 3 November 1917; *Rhondda Leader,* 3 November 1917).

All the reports indicate that the speeches were punctuated with enthusiastic and appreciative cheering, which would seem to indicate that Smuts was preaching to the converted. His appeal to their patriotism did not fall on deaf ears. In fact, in the second of his Tonypandy speeches he admitted that London had misinterpreted the mood of South Wales, and that the rumours of Wales wavering, becoming irritable and changing its mind on the great issues for which we fight, were slanderous. In the seven months he had been in England he had not been heartened more than by 'gallant little

Wales', which 'under the hammer strokes of fate', ring true (Smuts Papers, A1 Box 301/1, 15).

The speeches were nothing if not morale-boosting, which was one of the remits of the National War Aims Committee, and even *The Pioneer* conceded the 'apparent success' of the Tonypandy meeting. The *Pioneer* report, not surprisingly, however, was largely negative, and in this respect, was something of an aberration. The speeches, it argued, were vacuous, filled with the usual militaristic platitudes and abstractions. Smuts was denigrated for his hypocrisy and audacity in talking about liberty and freedom, while the memory was still fresh of his use of troops against fellow unfortunate wage-slaves in the goldmines of the Rand in July 1913. The 'moanings and death-cries' of the miners still echoed in the imagination, along with the memory of the transportation of nine Labour leaders to London. Brace's speech was described as sloppy and bombastic, in the knowledge that his audience reflected the views of the right-wing *South Wales Echo* (*Pioneer,* 3 November 1917).

Far more representative of the reports was that of the *Rhondda Leader,* a Liberal / Labour-leaning newspaper, which was positive in its characterisation of the speeches and their reception. It reported the contents of the speeches at length, as did the London *Times* (30 October 1917), and pointed out that the vote of thanks was carried with enthusiasm, followed by the spontaneous breaking-out of singing *For he's a jolly good fellow* (3 November 1917). Brace's speech was described as 'rousing' and containing some 'straight talk', whereas Dr Macnamara began his speech in Welsh, and went on to give an account of the origins of the war and Germany's dream of world power. At both the Empire and Ebenezer Chapel, the speeches were 'received with the utmost enthusiasm', and at the conclusion, the 'visitors were given a hearty send-off' (3 November 1917).

There is little doubt that Smuts had a rapturous reception at all four engagements in Wales.[7] They had been meticulously orchestrated, and publicised. Did his speeches, along with those of Brace and Macnamara, have the intended effect of persuading the miners to vote against 'down-tools'?

The ballot was held on two consecutive days after the visit, and on those days the miners were unable to work, not because they were on strike, but because the safety officers and firemen were in dispute over a completely different issue; the recognition of their union. Only those pits that had recently been inspected were permitted to work. This allowed the miners time to vote in large numbers. They voted overwhelmingly in favour of rejecting 'down-tools', with some variation across the lodges. Only 23% of those who voted across the coalfield opposed the 'Combing-Out' of miners, whereas 44% opposed it in Merthyr and the adjacent Dowlais (South Wales Miners' Federation Minutes, 1917). The 77% vote in favour would have been greater had not such lodges as Risca, with 2 000 men, refused to vote because they opposed the unpatriotic nature of the ballot in the first place.

The National War Aims Committee saw the result as a considerable success for its propaganda activities in South Wales. The War Cabinet was able to make an assessment on the basis of two sources of opinion-gathering: the weekly reports of the Ministry of Labour, under David Shackleton, the permanent secretary, on the 'Labour Situation', and the fortnightly reports from the Criminal Investigation Department, written by Basil Thomson. While not completely unbiased, neither had an axe to grind against The National War Aims Committee and are more reliable than the Committee's own assessments. It was Shackleton who suggested a NWAC

7 I have been unable to find any reference to the honorary degree he was awarded in 1917. In the list of honorary degrees in the Smuts House Museum it lists LL.D from University of Wales, 1917, and LL.D Cardiff University, 1921. At that time the University was the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, a constituent college of the University of Wales.

campaign in South Wales in order to influence the ballot against the policy of 'Combing-Out' in the mines. The report of 31 October suggests that the campaign, with its high-profile speakers, produced 'outstanding results' and succeeded in resisting attempts to organise opposition to Smuts's speech. Tonypandy was identified as fervently pacifist, and the most likely place to have caused trouble. The lack of success of the pacifists, however, indicated to Shackleton that despite their vociferousness they had little influence. The report of 7 November anticipated that an overwhelming majority would vote 'no' in the ballot, and specifically took the negative criticism of the article in the *Pioneer* to be indicative of the ILP's concerns about the effectiveness of the campaign. The report hailed the work of the National War Aims Committee a success in South Wales constituting a very serious defeat for the pacifists, and a great encouragement to the patriots of South Wales. It cautioned, however, that with the eyes of the country on them, 15 000[8] men voted against the 'Comb-Out', and effectively the War. It was imperative, therefore, that such campaigns continue in order to counteract the systematic and vigorous propaganda of the pacifists.

To what extent can we attribute this overwhelming rejection of strike action to Smuts? The press coverage which reported on the results as they were released over a number of days celebrated the patriotism of the South Wales miners, and invariably saw the outcome of the ballot as a resounding defeat for the pacifists, described as a 'rout of the South Wales Extremists' (*Yorkshire Evening Post*, 12 November 1917), and a 'remarkable demonstration of working class patriotism' (*The Times*, 1917).

It was recognised that the popularity of the influence of pacifism may have been exaggerated, and that in holding the ballot the South Wales Miners' Federation had called their bluff and revealed the weakness of their support (*The*

8 This figure of 15 000 proved to be a serious underestimation by the time the results were officially released. The final figures were 28 903 who voted 'yes', and 98 946 against (South Wales Miners Federation Minutes, 1917).

Scotsman, 6 November 1917). Much of the criticism of the miners before the ballot had wrongly equated the general unrest with anti-war and pacifist sympathies, whereas it was really indicative of the more widespread industrial unrest in the South Wales coalfield and dissatisfaction with the owners (*Scotsman,* 6 November 1917). The politicians and press, it was suggested, had been reckless in their characterisation of Welsh miners as harbouring treasonable feelings (*The Globe,* 8 November 1917). The men themselves, it was suggested, had the greatest percentage of voluntary enlistments in the country (*Westminster Gazette,* 6 November 1917), of whom over 50 000 were miners at the start of the war, and were hugely supportive of their comrades, as the vote had demonstrated. Clement Edwards, a Welsh Liberal MP, wrote to the King indicating that the miners had voted almost solidly in favour of being conscripted themselves, 'instancing the most beautiful demonstration of patriotism yet evinced from any industrial population' (*Scotsman,* 19 November 1917). The King replied that he was sure that it was in no small measure due to the way that Edwards had put the issues to his constituents in the mining area of East Glamorgan.

Smuts's name received next to no mention in the reporting of the ballot. There are a couple of exceptions. Alfred Yeo, the liberal MP for Poplar, and prominent ally of Lloyd George, spoke in the South Wales mining districts in support of the Government's 'Combing-Out' policy. He is reported to have spoken at several large meetings at which he detected no disaffection with the war, and in evidence mentions that General Smuts was given a 'royal welcome' on his recent visit to Wales (*Westminster Gazette,* 6 November 1917). The Welsh language newspaper *Seren Cymru* approved of Smuts's visit, suggesting that the people of Wales needed to be reminded of 'Man's Duties', rather than 'Man's Rights' (2 November 1917). *The Scotsman* made a much stronger claim. It suggested that the ballot had brought out a minority of pacifist intriguers who vigorously attempted to work-up support, which was in the end 'completely swamped in the enthusiasm created by

General Smuts's visit and his stirring speech' (*The Scotsman,* 6 November 1917).

It may be concluded that Smuts was a useful instrument for promoting the propaganda of the National War Aims Committee, but to suggest that he had more than a marginal influence on the vote would be a considerable exaggeration. He and his fellow speakers at Tonypandy were pushing at an open door. The 'Report From The Ministry of Labour on the Labour Situation' for the week-ending 17 October 1917, was concerned about the rise in activities, including public meetings, educational classes and protest meetings, by syndicalists, socialists and pacifists. The ILP was identified as the main protagonist for pacifism, with the aid of the Union of Democratic Control, the Council for Civil Liberties and the Women's Peace Crusade. South Wales was singled out to be particularly fertile ground, and the impending ballot one of the more serious problems. The report suggests that the ballot will fail, because 'the patriotic element, which is commonly stated to be, though not voluble, exceedingly numerous' (CAB 24/29/31). Erring on the side of caution it was suggested that this element should be stimulated and supported by organising a series of public meetings for which the National War Aims Committee should be responsible. Subsequent events, the report for the week ending 31 October maintained, had vindicated the earlier view that the resolution of the Delegates' Conference of 8 October in favour of a ballot did not represent the attitude of the majority of miners. It reports that mass meetings were held throughout the coalfield which passed resolutions protesting against the pacifist policies of the Delegates' Conference. It noted the opposition of the Executive to vote in favour of 'down-tools.' In addition, it claims that the campaign of the National War Aims Committee was outstandingly successful, the most notable meetings being those at Abertillery, 27 October, addressed by Macnamara, who also spoke at Tonypandy, and those of Smuts at Cardiff and Tonypandy (CAB/24/30/57).

There appears to be no doubt about the impending result prior to Smuts's visit, and the report was confident that 'the

pacifists party's vociferousness is out of proportion to its influence'. The report continues: 'it may be accepted with the utmost confidence that no strike will follow' (CAB/24/30/57).

Smuts, then, was part of a well-orchestrated campaign, that may have bolstered morale by extolling the virtues of patriotism, but there is no question that the vote would have swayed the other way. There was no strike to end, and there were no negotiations to which Smuts was party, unlike his later intervention to resolve the strike between aeroplane manufacturing workers and employers in Coventry (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph,* Monday 3 December 1917). The strike in the South Wales Coalfields at the time of Smuts's visit was by safety inspectors and firemen for union recognition, in which Smuts had no interest. The ballot for 'down-tools' by the South Wales miners had been instigated by a small minority of radical activists. Vernon Hartshorn, a prominent member of the South Wales Miners' Federation Executive, complained that the ballot had been forced on the miners by 'the pro Kaiser policy of the peace-at-any-price extremists' (*South Wales Daily News,* 24 October 1917). Because it had been procedurally, and constitutionally, recommended, the Executive felt it would be politically unwise, and potentially divisive to submit it to another ballot. Not even the leadership of the Federation was in favour of rejecting 'Combing-Out', even though many were advocates of a negotiated settlement to the war. The recommendation to the miners of the Executive Council of the South Wales Miners' Federation, including the President, James Winstone, and the General Secretary, Tom Richards, was to vote against strike action. Campaigning in Pontypool, the President argued that too much hysteria and prejudice surrounded the issue, and that they should vote against 'down-tools.' He had nothing but contempt for those who had entered the mines in order to avoid military service. His views on the war had not changed, he asserted. He was still in favour of peace by negotiation, but firmly believed that if the miners disregarded his advice there would be anarchy resulting in a disastrous effect on the allies (*The People,* 28 October 1917). The General Secretary urged the miners to show loyalty

and patriotism by doing their duty in a crisis. A vote against 'Combing-Out' would not lead to negotiations, but instead undermine their kith and kin on the battlefields (*Western Mail,* 24 October 1917). In reaffirming that the ballot proceed despite many objections received from miners' lodges urging the vote to be abandoned, the Council urged that the whole of the workforce take part in the ballot and vote 'no' (South Wales Miners' Federation minutes, 29 October 1917; *Western Daily Press,* 30 October 1917).

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4. First Ministers

Jan Smuts and Cabinet Government in the Early Union of South Africa

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Introduction

For a figure who generates such widespread interest, and about whom so much has been written, Jan Smuts's assumption of multiple cabinet portfolios has been the subject of very little scholarly attention. Both biographers and historians tend to simply mention his portfolios, with scant analysis as to the precedent and utility of his assumption of more than one ministerial portfolio in Louis Botha's cabinet, as well as portfolios in his own future cabinets (Native Affairs between 1919 and 1924, and then Defence and External Affairs from 1939 when he was Prime Minister once more). Yet it was an extraordinary undertaking, sustained over decades of his cabinet involvement, having been virtually without precedent and destined to prove influential to future administrations.

This chapter seeks to contribute to this under-examined aspect of Smuts's career, and of South Africa's governmental history, by shedding light and hopefully generating debate. It argues that the assumption of multiple ministerial portfolios can account for the successes of the early Union and the post-1948 governments on those important areas that made up the government's policy, namely forming a capable state, reducing white poverty, controlling the black populations, and projecting South Africa internationally. Crucially, then, the converse lack of its adoption explains the shortcomings of the post-1994 government, seen through the lack of state capacity (Tshishonga & De Vries, 2011; Hausmann et al., 2023). That

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is, despite different ideological leanings and priorities, the common thread across heads of national executive between 1910 and 1994 (Pime Ministers and later, State Presidents) was the possession of ministerial experience as well as regular assumption of ministerial portfolios by those at the helm. In the first cabinet, formed in 1910, Smuts held three cabinet positions (Interior, Mines and later, Defence when he formed the Union Defence Force in 1912), the first and for a while the only person to do so other than the Prime Minister himself. Barry Hertzog followed suit, taking up Native Affairs, and then External Affairs. His Deputy Prime Minister, Tielman Roos, was also Minister of Justice (two positions later assumed by Smuts himself in the Fusion Government after 1929).

In the apartheid era, the first Prime Minister, Daniël François (D.F.) Malan, came with his own triple-ministerial experience, having held Public Health, Mines and Education. His successor, Johannes Gerhardus (J.G.) Strijdom, who had been Minister of Lands and Irrigation, was the least experienced and shortest-lived Prime Minister. His death in 1958 paved the way for another Prime Minister with Native Affairs experience who had been the 'architect of apartheid,' Hendrik Frensch (H.F.) Verwoerd, as much of the legislative force behind race relations had come from him (Kenney, 1980). His own death, caused by assassination in 1966, led to the ascension of Balthazar Johannes (B.J.) Vorster. He held onto his own ministerial portfolio, Police. He had also been the main mover behind numerous pieces of legislation which consolidated South Africa into not only an apartheid state, but a securitised one as well. Various initiatives such as the General Law Amendment Act number 37 of 1963, the Criminal Procedure Amendment Act number 96 of 1965 and the Internal Security Amendment Act number 79 of 1976, the former entailing the infamous 'Sobukwe Clause' and the latter expanding the scope of the Suppression of Communism Act number 44 of 1950, were passed under him. Pieter Willem (P.W.) Botha, his successor, also resolved to hold onto his cabinet portfolio, becoming Prime Minister in 1978 and Minister of Defence. In both positions, he drove South Africa's

border wars and its nuclear attainment of a nuclear weapon. When he had a stroke in 1989, he was succeeded by Frederik Willem (F.W.) de Klerk, who was unique in that he had the most ministerial portfolios of any national leader by his possession of six prior ministerial portfolios.

From 1994 onwards, the tide turned. No South African president in the democratic era has assumed a ministerial portfolio, nor has any come with any meaningful prior cabinet portfolio experience. The closest to buck this trend, Kgalema Motlanthe, had been a 'Minister in the Presidency' for three months and would go on to be a caretaker President for about eight months (September 2008 to May 2009). This experience deficit, along with the lack of willingness to attempt the constitutionality of assuming a simultaneous ministerial portfolio, explains to a large extent the difference in capacity to effectively lead the country. As shall be seen, Jan Smuts, alongside Louis Botha, set the pattern of national leaders commanding from the front, both in peace and in wartime, a pattern which was followed by nearly all of their successors. For Smuts in particular, the portfolios he assumed allowed him to be able to put down rebellions, respond to crises, project South Africa's stature within the British Empire / Commonwealth and the rest of the world, and provide policy leadership (no matter how flawed) on race relations.

The following section reviews the context leading up to Smuts's role in the Union government, probing early clues into his future inclination towards dual roles in cabinet. The subsequent section will delve into what he did with those roles, paying attention to key episodes as case studies in miniature. The final section considers the power and limitations of heads of national executives being specialist ministers within their own cabinets.

The Historical Context

By the time Jan Smuts came back from his studies in Cambridge, Paul Kruger was the President of the South African Republic. All departments, including the police, the detective

and secret services, were under his hand with little oversight by the parliament of the day, the *Volksraad* (the Assembly of the Representatives of the People). That body 'obeyed his orders: any Bill he placed before it was passed with little discussion and no opposition.' There was one exception, and one which would catapult Smuts into Kruger's orbit: only the courts asserted their independence from him. This did not prevent him from attempting to interfere with their findings. 'More than once he sent for the Chief Justice and instructed him what he should find in cases before him, but Kotzé refused to take such instructions' (Armstrong, 1938:66). The matter intensified. The major bone of contention was the 'resolutions' through which Kruger tended to issue his dictates, typically rushed through the *Volksraad* to give them force of law. This practice led to a constantly shifting legal framework, affecting commerce (Armstrong, 1938). The dispute between President Kruger and Chief Judge Kotzé became personal between the two men, to the point of the latter threatening to resign from his position. With an election coming up, the President nonetheless bided his time. His popularity was helped immensely by the failed Jameson Raid, and he easily won his fourth term. One of his first actions was to dismiss the Chief Justice. In the Transvaal and the Cape, the legal fraternity was united in its anger against the President, and the blow to one of their own and the judiciary. There was one main exception; a young Jan Smuts, who either saw an opportunity to endear himself to the President or agreed with his actions – or both. 'Alone among the lawyers he backed the President and the politicians against the Chief Justice and the legal profession' (Armstrong, 1938:67). He decided to write a thesis, which drew on research on English and American laws to argue that Kruger had been correct in his actions: 'The President exercised the powers entrusted to him with singular patience and forbearance,' it said. Sidestepping the encroachments on judicial independence, the only aspect in which it disagreed with the President's approach was that he ought to have had the Chief Justice tried before a tribunal for insubordination. Despite the negativity it produced towards Smuts, the work 'lifted Smuts out of the ordinary ruck of briefless barristers

in Johannesburg into the limelight' (Armstrong, 1938:68). The President had needed legal minds who could provide him support against the overwhelmingly united anger of the lawyers in South Africa. He met Smuts, whom he determined could be a useful figure. He appointed him to the position of State Attorney in 1895, from which position he worked closely with the powerful President, soon developing a 'father and son' relationship in Kruger's view (Smuts, 1952), during which the younger man must have observed the older exercise a firm grip on government. As State Attorney, Smuts dismissed the ineffective head of the Criminal Investigation Department, Bob Ferguson, and ran it himself. Reflecting on this decision, Smuts claimed that 'I succeeded in cleaning out the…Stable of corrupt Detective Administration and established in its stead a system which has worked with admirable results' (Smuts, 1952:40). Oftentimes Attorney General Smuts represented President Kruger in important discussions with the British. One of these was the ill-fated negotiations that led to the Second Anglo Boer War, that would eventually produce the Union of South Africa.

At the time of the establishment of the Union, the norm had been the occupation of single office by national leaders in the Western world. Fears of an Imperial ruler date as far back as antiquity; in Rome, a consul had to forgo his position if he was to be governor, and vice-versa, and could not command soldiers on Roman soil. Nevertheless, by the time South Africa was being colonised by the British, there had been a regular practice for a Prime Minister to play more than a single role – William Pitt the Younger had been his own Chancellor of the Exchequer and so had Robert Peel and the nineteenth century's arch rivals Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone. Indeed, when the Boer Republics were warring with the British during the Second Anglo Boer War, their rival, Lord Salisbury, was both Prime Minister and his own Foreign Secretary (the equivalent of a Minister of International Relations and Cooperation in our system). Salisbury had been appointed a third time in 1895, having been Prime Minister twice before (1885-86 and 1887-92) – and both of those times he had

chosen to be his own Foreign Secretary. In its profile of past Foreign Secretaries, the UK Government (2024) remembers him for his notable combination of both offices, recording that 'Salisbury much preferred the Foreign Office to Downing Street. It was as Foreign Secretary that he could pursue a sophisticated intellectual policy in relative peace and quiet.'

After the Union of South Africa was passed in the British parliament, the King determined that it would come into effect in May 1910. Louis Botha was invited by the Governor-General, in terms of section fourteen of the constitution, to form a cabinet. The cabinet would be in office between May until September (the date Botha determined set for the election). His first cabinet consisted of the following members.

1. L. Botha: Prime Minister and Agriculture
2. J.W. Sauer: Railways and Harbours
3. J.C. Smuts: Interior, Mines (until 1912), Defence (from 1912)
4. J.B.M. Hertzog: Justice, and later, Native Affairs (1912)
5. F.S. Malan: Education
6. A. Fischer: Lands
7. H. Burton: Native Affairs
8. F.R. Moor: Commerce and Industries
9. D. Graaff: Public Works
10. C.O. Gubbins: Without Portfolio

Smuts was thus the only Minister other than the Prime Minister himself to hold more than one cabinet ministry. Although there was a limit of ten Ministers, Botha still saw it fit to grant Smuts more than one portfolio, despite the availability of Gubbins (of Natal). When he eventually succeeded Botha in 1919, Smuts gave up his two remaining portfolios and took up Native Affairs, which the late Prime Minister had taken up in 1912. In his second Premiership he took up Defence and External Affairs.

Jan Smuts: Interior, Finance, Defence and Native Affairs

Like Grover Cleveland in the United States, Jan Smuts is the only person in his country to have assumed leadership of the executive in non-consecutive stints. In him, the first Premiership (1919-1924) seems like a rehearsal for the second (1939-1948): confronting internal rebellion, world war, international statesmanship, and political defeat at home due to the race question. Throughout both periods, Smuts was both Prime Minister and Minister of two portfolios – Defence and Native Affairs at first, and then Defence and External Affairs in the second.

The Defence portfolio had always been particularly important to him, in part because he had founded it. For about two years after its founding in 1910, South Africa did not have a national military. The Defence Act number 13 of 1912 made provision for a permanent force, as well as a part-time active citizen force, and a citizens' reserve. Military training would be compulsory for eligible men, who would either join the Union Defence Force, or rifle clubs that were akin to the commando system that had existed in the Boer Republics. Smuts, already Minister of the Interior and of Mines, 'with great energy' went about building the armed forces to 'enable the country to participate in the defence of Empire' (Steyn, 2015:175).

In July 1913, a white miners' strike on the Witwatersrand mines turned violent. 'In the rioting, shops were looted, the Johannesburg railway station set alight and the office of *The Star* newspaper, regarded as the mouthpiece of the mine owners, burnt down. Twenty-one people died and forty-seven were injured' (Steyn, 2015:186). The police were unable to control a mass meeting that turned violent. Here, his simultaneous command of multiple ministries proved advantageous. Being both Minister of Mines and Defence, he would be able to respond directly. At this time, however, the country still had to rely on Imperial troops, as the South African army was still practically non-existent (the Boer Republics had relied on voluntary citizen armies in the *commando* system).

Eventually Prime Minister Botha and Minister Smuts, both military men and bitter-enders of the Second Anglo Boer War, were forced to capitulate to the striking workers and signed the 'Bain Treaty.' It was a humiliating experience, and Smuts said it was one of the hardest things he had ever had to do and vowed that he would never find himself in a similar situation again (Steyn, 2021:186).

Just a few months later, a Natal coalminers' strike spread to railway workers in Pretoria, and gold miners of the Witwatersrand (where a general strike involving some 20 000 workers of all races had been declared. Steyn (2021:186) observes that:

> This time, Smuts was ready. He called up units of the newly mobilised UDF, ordered burghers in the rural districts to protect railway stations and other strategic points, and sent General Koos de la Rey and his men into Johannesburg to train their guns on Trade Hall, the strikers' headquarters.

The miners realised that they were outgunned and quickly capitulated. Smuts, who was not entirely pleased with this outcome and wanted to take no further risks, rushed nine migrant trade union leaders by special train to Durban, where they were put on a ship, the *Umgeni,* bound for Britain. Having both the Departments of Defence and the Interior, effectively the precursor of the present-day Department of Home Affairs, must have enabled Smuts to accomplish this with ease. Still, the deportation was not legal; thus Smuts had to argue his case before the parliament, which eventually indemnified the government's actions.

Smuts at the Helm: Internal Rebellion, World Wars and Race Relations

August 1914 saw the outbreak of a war in Europe which roped in much of the world. After the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (effectively the Crown Prince of Austria-Hungary) and his wife Duchess Sophie, by a Serbian Nationalist in Sarajevo on 28 July, his uncle, Emperor Franz

Joseph, soon sought retribution, to which Russia began mobilising, ready to defend its smaller ally, Serbia. In return, Germany, an ally of Austria-Hungary, offered a 'blank cheque' – Germany would come to Austria's defence no matter what. In turn, Russia called on its Western ally, France, to join in on its side should Germany enter the war. The Germans were perfectly happy to go to war with their long-standing rival; however, the most effective way to do so was to overrun Belgium and invade France through its less-defended north-eastern border. Britain was in turn obligated by treaty to be a guarantor of Belgian neutrality and security and was brought into the war by the German plan. International law was especially important to the British who, as a trading empire, were reliant on some of its key principles and conventions, including freedom of navigation of the seas. The network of obligation was extended not only to allies in Europe, but also the colonies in Africa and Asia. British entry compelled South Africa to enter the conflict.

In particular, the British soon requested South Africa to invade German South West Africa (later, Namibia). On 10 August, 'after intense discussion among members of a divided cabinet, South Africa informed the British government that its request would be met. But parliamentary approval had first to be obtained, and only volunteers would be used in any invasion of South West Africa' (Steyn, 2021:190). At this time, the UDF consisted of two arms: the Permanent Force led by Brigadier-General H.T. Lukin, and the Active Citizen Force led by Commandant-General Christian F. Beyers. Neither commander outranked the other; both reported directly to the Minister of Defence. Beyers disliked the Union Defence Act being used to realise the ideal of national statehood by integrating Englishmen and Afrikaners under arms.

In the House of Assembly, 92 to 12 voted in favour of invading South West Africa (SWA), while the vote was 24 to 5 in the Senate. On 14 September, parliament adjourned and that same night the first UDF troopships departed for the coast of German SWA; Beyers resigned on 15 September. At a cabinet meeting on 26 October, Botha informed his colleagues that

he would 'have no truck with treason but would go into action himself against Beyers' (Steyn, 2021:210). He took personal command of the UDF forces and invaded. Smuts would later be tasked with instituting Martial Law in 1914 (October). With German SWA defeated and virtually annexed by July of 1915, Smuts was soon compelled to turn his attention towards German East Africa (Tanganyika), doing so in 1916. With his core objectives accomplished in January 1917, he returned to South Africa before setting off for Britain to join the Imperial War Cabinet. During this time, he began to be regarded as seeing himself too big for South Africa. He retorted that:

> South Africa is not too small for me, and ... every drop of blood and every bit of courage and determination I have in me will go to the service of my country. Whether it is here in the Union, whether it is away in East Africa, or whether it is in the Council Chamber of the Empire, I pray that I may have the strength to do my duty (Smuts, 1952:179-180).

This was incredible foreshadowing of the global career he was to embark on, straddling both his home country and the world, and always advancing the interests of the British Empire, to the perception that he neglected the domestic situation. With his time in the Imperial War Cabinet expiring, he was upgraded into the War Cabinet of Britain itself. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George pushed through for an exception to be made to the six-member limit to make Smuts its seventh member. With Germany and its allies defeated by the beginning of 1919, Smuts took part in the Paris Peace Conference, which platformed negotiations to determine the post-war order. Though not playing a leading role – that was reserved for the Big Four: Woodrow Wilson (US), Lloyd George (UK), Georges Clemenceau (France), and Vittorio Orlando (Italy) – Smuts did influence the agenda in informal ways, and through Lloyd George. At the beginning of the conference, he published a pamphlet titled *The League of Nations – A Practical Suggestion*, which argued that the League of Nations, a Wilson proposal, to be the main item on the agenda of the conference.

Moreover, he argued for a broader mandate for the League than was being entertained at the time:

> It is not sufficient for the League merely to be a sort of *deus ex machina* called in in very grave emergencies when the spectre of war appears: if it is to last, it must be much more. It must be an ever-visible living, working organ of the policy of civilisation (Smuts, 1952:215).

While the League never became this, another institution since established has come close: the United Nations (UN). Smuts would be the only person to sign the founding documents of both the League and the UN. Where Smuts did succeed, however, was in securing South African rule ('mandate') over German SWA.

After Botha's death in 1919, Governor-General Buxton called upon Smuts to form a new government (Steyn, 2021:267). 'Reluctantly, Smuts accepted, aware of the 'colossal responsibility' that he had inherited, but also keenly aware of his own temperamental deficiencies. At his first party caucus meeting, he warned his colleagues that, unlike Botha, he had 'neither tact, nor patience'; they would have to take him for what he was worth' (Steyn, 2021:267). But, like Botha, he did carry on with the act of running a cabinet Ministry of Native Affairs.

Historian and political sociologist Bongani Ngqulunga observes that before assuming the Premiership in 1919, Smuts had never particularly dealt with what was then referred to as 'native policy' (Ngqulunga, 2022:7). He notes, however, that Smuts picked up the Ministries of Defence and Native Affairs, both of which would be relevant in his tenure. 'It was in his capacity in this latter portfolio that Smuts introduced two pieces of legislation that expanded upon the notorious 1913 Natives Land Act by entrenching territorial and institutional segregation' (Ngqulunga, 2022:7) – these being the Native Affairs Act number 23 of 1920 (creating an all-white Native Affairs Commission and entrenching 'cultural' segregation)

and the Native (Urban Areas) Act number 21 of 1923 (which codified residential segregation in urban areas).

It was during his first Premiership that Smuts effectively signed off on the massacre of 163 black South Africans, in May 1921, in what has become remembered as the Bulhoek Massacre (Ngqulunga, 2022:7). As both Prime Minister and Minister of Native Affairs, he denied repeated requests made by a religious group of black people called the 'Israelites,' who had overstayed their permit for religious observance in Bulhoek, in order to listen to their pleas. Instead, he sent members of his department's Native Affairs Commission (NAC) to negotiate with the congregation (Ngqulunga, 2022:1). When these negotiations failed, and the Israelites still refused to move, he deployed some 800 policemen, armed with rifles and machineguns. Ngqulunga (2022:11) rightly argues that:

> [Secretary for Native Affairs] Barrat's presence is significant because of his official relationship to Smuts, who was not only the prime minister but was also Minister of Native Affairs, which means that Barrat reported to him directly. This indicates the Smuts government's involvement at the highest level in the massacre.

In his second Premiership, Smuts's coalition government was centred on the war, and is remembered for having been largely incompetent, with the exception of the Prime Minister himself and Jan-Hendrik Hofmeyr. In his triple capacity of Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Officer Commanding the South African Forces, 'Smuts threw all his amazing energy into the South African war effort' (Liebenberg, 1984a:442). He established the office of Director-General of Supplies and duly appointed Dr Van der Bijl to its leadership. Smuts also took charge of growing the Union Defence Force. As evident in Table 1, the Army, Air Force and Navy grew dramatically.

Table 1: Growth of the UDF.

	Army	Air force	Navy
1939	17 038	1 837	432
1948	132 194	44 569	9 455

Source: Liebenberg (1984a) and Wessels (2022).

In the battlefields of Eastern and North Africa, the UDF enjoyed successes in El Wak (1940), Addis Ababa (1941, April), Sidi Rezegh (1941, 18 to 23 November), Taon el Esen (1941, 22 to 26 November) and Bardia and Sallum (16 December 1941 to 17 January 1942). But there were catastrophic reversals in Tobruk on 21 June 1942, where 25 000 men under Major-General H.B. Klopper surrendered to the Germans. There were also contributions in El Alamein in Egypt under General Montgomery, but that was effectively the end of the war in Africa.

But, still eager for South Africa to play a role in the war in Europe, Smuts revoked his 1939 promise to his countrymen that South Africans would only fight in Africa and not be sent overseas. On 27 January 1943, he asked Parliament's approval to send South African soldiers to Europe (Liebenberg, 1984a:443). In April of that year, the Sixth South African Armoured Division entered the war in Italy. There was a total of 753 South Africans killed in Italy, 152 in East Africa, and 2 014 in North Africa. What of the domestic situation back home? Would there be another internal revolt? Liebenberg (1984a:444) observes:

> Although there was no repetition of the 1914 rebellion, the political conflict which erupted over South Africa's entry into the war was extraordinarily bitter. The Afrikaners were sharply divided into two groups, those who supported South Africa's war effort and those who opposed it.

The National Party (NP) had remained under the leadership of Hertzog until July of 1940, when his constitution was rejected. At this time, there were various other Afrikaner

parties, as Hertzog's followers either stayed on with Malan's NP or those who were more loyal formed the Afrikaner Party under Havenga. Oswald Pirow founded the *Nuwe Order*, a pro-German grouping. The *Ossewa-Brandwag* was also established during this time, ostensibly as a 'cultural group', but it had an overtly political character. In light of these domestic threats, Smuts made the decision to confiscate all privately licensed firearms to prevent another 1914-style rebellion.

The 1943 elections were a showdown between a divided opposition against a self-confident United Party (UP). Further aiding the UP is the fact that in 1943, the war was beginning to turn around and the Allies were making advances. To quote Blackman and Dall (2022:200), Smuts, the UP and its pre-war allies in Labour and the Dominion Party 'had a relative cakewalk' (Blackman & Dall, 2022:200). With the war being the main issue in the voters' minds, the UP grew by 105 seats, and was supported by two Independents and three black representatives. The opposition declined from 63 to 43.

By the 1948 election, however, matters had changed drastically. That year's singular issue was domestic policy, particularly the direction of the country on race relations. It was a referendum on either the Fagan report (mid-way between equality / integration and segregation) and the Sauer report (apartheid) (Liebenberg, 1984c:457). For voters, 'apartheid' was something clear and concrete: 'it was not the stumbling, bumbling, piecemeal patchwork approach that had characterised Botha, Smuts and even Hertzog's segregationist policies: it was total onslaught' (Blackman & Dall, 2022:213). When the results were counted, the *Herenigde Nasionale Party* (HNP) had received 70 seats (up from 43), and its ally, the Afrikaner Party, 9 (from 0). The two would enter into coalition government, and merge to form the National Party in 1951. For its part, the United Party declined to 65 from 89. The Labour Party lost three seats, coming back with only six seats.

Conclusion: The Power and Limits of Multiple Portfolios

Smuts's middle way on race relations was out of step internationally and domestically: with the rest of the post-war international mood, as espoused by the United Nations, its worldview was passé, but for the white voters at home it was too timid. The alliance between Malan and Havenga thus won a majority of five seats against the United Party, the Labour Party and the black representatives (Liebenberg, 1984c:462). Smuts, bitterly disappointed about the outcome, duly resigned and Malan formed a cabinet.

The United Party had emerged so strongly in 1943 because of the war tide, but by 1948 the issues had changed. Under Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Jan Smuts, the UP had not kept up with the domestic and economic issues that took precedence. The apartheid policy of the NP was also attractive to the white voters, particularly the Afrikaner section, which represented 60% of the voting population at that time. Many of these were drawn to apartheid in light of decolonisation in Asia. On the other hand, food shortages began during the war, but continued afterwards (Liebenberg, 1984c:464). Though the issue had abated in 1946, housing remained an issue. Liebenberg (1984c:465) writes:

> The war was its chief issue, but the government was not blameless in the matter. In February 1944, there was a shortage of 30 000 houses for whites and 120 000 houses for the other races. The government made many promises but did little to fulfil them.

That Smuts and his party were out of touch is demonstrated by the focus of their attack on the HNP's poor war record (Blackman & Dall, 2022:214). By 1948, global events were no longer front of mind to the voters. Indeed, housing shortages had grown by another 6 000 in 1947 (Liebenberg, 1984c:465). This was a consequence of Smuts, preoccupied by his Defence portfolio and the war abroad, surrounding himself with a largely hapless cabinet on the domestic front, whose only

leading light, as seen, was Hofmeyr (Blackman & Dall, 2022:211).

The Deputy Prime Minister merits a close look as well. A single account will suffice to illustrate his immense capacity for work. In June of 1940, Hofmeyr, speaking at the opening of the Great Hall of the University of the Witwatersrand, was attending in three capacities: as Chancellor (having been appointed in March 1939), as Minister of Finance, and as Minister of Education. According to Murray (2022:9), in his address, Hofmeyr, as Minister of Finance, thanked the Chancellor for the proper spending of state funds; as Minister of Education, he congratulated the Chancellor on the University's trajectory; finally, as Chancellor he thanked the Minister of Finance for his interest and the Minister of Education for his message of congratulation! Taking over the three ministerial portfolios from DF Malan in 1933 (Public Health in addition to the two already mentioned), 'he mastered the business of his three departments in as many days' (Paton, 1964:201). Finance, however, 'Hofmeyr took over … with a mixture of elation and trepidation.' (Paton, 1964:330). His first budget was nevertheless an outstanding success. It has been said that 'he was the brain and power behind the South African war machine, in all except the military. Smuts did not hesitate to load him with work and he did not hesitate to accept it' (Paton, 1964:333-4). One of these was the role of Deputy Prime Minister. His relatively progressive views on race, from such a prominent position, further tilted voters towards the right-wing alternatives. According to Paton (1964:473):

> The strategy was clear – to exploit post-war dissatisfactions, the dangers of UNO (United Nations Organization) and communism, the breakdown of the Natives Representatives Council, the menace of the Indian population, and above all, the colour policy of the United Party, which, now that Hofmeyr had been appointed Deputy Prime Minister, was clearly the colour policy of Hofmeyr.

For future prime minister J.G. Strijdom, it was a 'Hofmeyr election' (Paton, 1964:473). In the devastating defeat of that

election, Smuts's loss of his own seat in Standerton by W.C. du Plessis, a virtually unknown figure in South African politics, by 3 750 votes to 3 535 was especially humiliating (Blackman & Dall, 2022:215). A national head of executive who also wishes to drive a specific portfolio should therefore avoid becoming so great a specialist that other portfolios and issues receive less attention than they should. It is also prudent to have a broadly capable cabinet, so that the work is distributed amongst capable hands. In this regard, Smuts failed where his predecessors (both Botha and Hertzog) and future successors would not; forming a capable cabinet that would give expression to different priorities, whilst he drove that area in which he most excelled: war and international relations.

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5. Discovering General Smuts through the Lens of World War I in Africa

A Bibliographical Exploration

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Introduction

Contemporary historians of the military Smuts have yet to identify the essence of the man, his loadstar or driving force. Many remain confused by the capricious political nature that saw him jump Rhodes's ship to join the Republican Boer cause, only once again to become one of the Empire's staunchest proponents. One can better comprehend the enigma of Smuts at the strategic level of war once one places his overriding objective of territorial expansion as the cornerstone of his 50-year career. He subsumed all else in his desire to unite South Africa, expand its borders northward, and fulfil Rhodes's dream of a contiguous British territory from Cape to Cairo. His quest for a 'Greater South Africa' began to unravel almost immediately after the Union of South Africa's formation in 1910, where he failed to incorporate the High Commission Territories and later Rhodesia into the Union. The military Smuts, who achieved much at the operational level of war in conquering German South West Africa (GSWA) in 1915 and 90% of German East Africa (GEA) in 1916, could not permanently annex the former nor swap the latter for the Portuguese territory of Delagoa Bay. Ironically, a byproduct of Smuts's sub-Imperialism was the formation of the Union Defence Force in 1912 and his gift of a South African manoeuvre doctrine, which has endured through to the South

African Defence Force and the current South African National Defence Force. In seeking Smuts's legacy, his biographers have tended to ignore or denigrate his career's military aspects.

Having accumulated a wealth of military experience by the time he took charge of the Allied campaign in GEA in 1916, Smuts remained accused in many circles of inexperience and being somewhat less than a gifted amateur. His experiences in the Second Ango Boer War (1899-1902), the first phase of the GSWA campaign in 1914, the 1914 Rebellion against the Union government and the second phase of the GSWA campaign in 1915 allowed him to forge his skills at the operational level of war. Yet the GSWA campaign, especially the first phase of which Smuts played a leading role in its planning and execution, has been forgotten. His role as the operational brains behind suppressing the 1914 Rebellion against the Union government is ignored or underestimated. Smuts, leading the Southern Force in GSWA in 1915, unlocked the German defences, which allowed Louis Botha to restore mobility to the Northern Force and eventually defeat the Germans at Otavifontein 1915. Historians have relegated Smuts's role in the second phase of the GSWA campaign to a 'symbolic role'. However, his performance in GEA has attracted the most vitriolic attention. Richard Meinertzhagen (1960), who served under Smuts in GEA, led the charge. Harold Courtney Armstrong wrote a scathing analysis of Smuts (Armstrong. 1937) questioning his abilities as a general. Contemporary Smuts biographers have almost exclusively drawn upon these two works for decades, fuelling a skewed assessment of Smuts's generalship. Without a balanced synthesis of secondary and primary sources, an unhealthy academic cross-citation culture persists, which has stymied research on the military Smuts.

Smuts enjoyed much public acclaim and interest directly after both World Wars. Most of the attention given by historians of these times took the form of biography and followed the format of Thomas Carlyle's Great Man (Schapiro, 1945:101, 102). Similarly, 85% of popular, published material relating to Smuts's World War I service appeared during the periods immediately after the World Wars. After that, a long

hiatus followed, and until recently, the subject has received scant attention. The turn of the twenty-first century has witnessed an uptake in interest, with books of varying quality appearing in time for the 100th anniversary of World War I. Contemporary works concerning World War I in Africa attempt to elevate Africa from its long relegation as a mere sideshow. These books follow Spencer's approach and examine the social impact of the war (Spencer, 1896:31). Smuts garners a modicum of attention in some of them. Few books have devoted much space to evaluating Smuts in terms of his military career and performance as a general.

This overview comprehensively examines the historiography surrounding Smuts's military career. It includes an assessment of secondary and primary sources and identifies how certain publications have achieved primacy amongst historians, influencing their assessment of Smuts's generalship. Other publications of those who fought against him or under his command highlight his competency differently. It has also been challenging for Smuts to emerge from beneath the light of his opponent in GEA, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, whose exploits have attracted rapturous fervour in certain quarters. Popular historians have misrepresented von Lettow-Vorbeck's remarkable survival against great odds in GEA as 'guerilla warfare', and his achievements at evading annihilation have been grossly exaggerated. Smuts's noteworthy campaign often takes a back seat with the USA's Army and War Colleges, who prefer the German over the South African versions. This study highlights other avenues of historiography that researchers may profitably mine to render a more equitable assessment of Smuts as general.

Creating Context: General Histories of Empire, South Africa, and the South African Military

Smuts's World War I took place within the context of empire and expansionism, pursuits that were two sides of the same coin. Smuts was a product and keen proponent of the British

Empire and an avid expansionist. He ceaselessly sought opportunities to move South Africa's borders inexorably northwards. His Imperial / expansionist desires were his prime motivation, which lends context to his modus operandi, political decisions and, importantly, his military strategy. Unravelling the essence of the military Smuts requires a keen understanding of his Imperial role and expansionist policies. There are excellent books that uncover the mysteries of British Imperialism.

Edward Said produced an impressive work, *Orientalism* (Said, 1979), which analysed the general patronising Western attitude towards Middle Eastern, Asian, and African societies. These prejudiced Western attitudes shaped the cultural attitudes of European Imperialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The West viewed these nations as static, underdeveloped, decadent, lazy, illogical, and even savage, whereas the West was viewed as flexible, developed, and superior. The driving force behind colonisation was often the notion of a 'civilising mission' and bringing enlightenment to 'inferior nations.' Imperialism was the force behind colonisation, and the ideology of Orientalism facilitated and justified the occupation and subjugation of foreign countries and nations. Smuts fully subscribed to the notion that black culture was underdeveloped, and reading Said's work goes a long way to explaining the thought processes that inhabited the minds of the leaders of that period.

David Cannadine published *Ornamentalism* (Cannadine, 2001), a counterargument to Said. Whereas Said saw empire based on racial prejudice and the superiority of one race over another, Cannadine argues that class, rank and status were the backbone of the British system of empire. The British sought to transplant their hierarchical social system within the colonies. The British recognised hierarchies and structures in their subject societies in much the same way as in British society. Cannadine admits that the British regarded the great mass of subject colonial populations with disdain, but this was also true regarding their attitude to Britain's urban and rural poor. The British thought of their subjects individually rather

than collectively, being more concerned with rank than race. A person's skin colour was less important than their position in the local social hierarchy.

In *The Cambridge History of South Africa*, Saul Dubow identified Smuts's departure from Ornamentalism to Orientalism. He sees Smuts as having an impulse to defer the 'native' issue to the future (Dubow, 2012:32,33). Together, these opposing points of view on the meaning of empire provide valuable insights into the philosophy of men such as Botha and Smuts and their vision, or lack thereof, surrounding the political aspirations of South African black people. Imperialism and colonialism are sensitive topics in the modern post-colonial world, and contemporary authors are apt to use these anachronisms as a stick to beat leaders of that era—Smuts being no exception.

Overwhelmingly, the more general histories of South Africa tend to concentrate on the Second Anglo Boer War and the 1914 Rebellion against the Union government, excluding World War I. A general history of South Africa that creates a context but is relatively thin on South Africa and World War I is the *Oxford History of South Africa* (Wilson & Thompson, 1975). It focuses on Afrikaner and African nationalism and South Africa's growing isolation after World War II. *A History of Southern Africa* by Eric Walker (1972) deals with World War I concisely and again indicates the scant attention given by historians to World War I in South African history. A more modern book, *a History of South Africa* by Frank Welsh, follows the general pattern and dedicates a few pages to World War I (Welsh, 2000). Thomas Pakenham's *The Scramble for Africa* inexplicably ignores the bloodiest and most protracted scramble for Africa—World War I in Africa (Pakenham, 1997).

Offering a concise but thorough treatment of South Africa in World War I is *South Africa in the Twentieth Century* (Liebenberg & Spies, 1994). It provides an overview of the reasons for South Africa's entry into the war, opposition to the war, the treatment of black people in the military, the conduct of the campaigns and the situation on the home front,

and the critical implications of the peace process following the war. Ian van der Waag's *A Military History of Modern South Africa* (Van der Waag, 2015) and Timothy Stapleton's *A Military History of South Africa* are more substantial military offerings (Stapleton, 2010). Van Der Waag offers a unique perspective when he proposes that all of South Africa's wars before 1994 amounted to 'Wars of South African Unification'. Stapleton's work spans from 1652 to the advent of a modern democratic South Africa. World War I receives succinct treatment within a concise chapter combining the World Wars. Stapleton acknowledges the paucity of information surrounding the development of the South African military from 1910 onward. Like Van der Waag, Stapleton traces the development of the South African military over centuries through the various military conflicts, eventually culminating in the modern-day South African National Defence Force (SANDF). Smuts, the founder of the UDF in 1912, forms an essential part of the nexus for both authors.

South African Expansionism and Sub-Imperialism: *Causus Belli*?

Expansionism is central to Smuts and his political and military conduct in World War I. Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw pioneered the study of South African expansionism and have done much to inform on the question. They have built on the work of authors such as Katzenellenbogen and Chanock. Expansionism before 1900 is dealt with in N.G. Garson's thesis on the Boer Republics' designs on Swaziland. It demonstrates the depth, breadth and enormous timespan for which expansionism has coursed through South African veins (Garson, 1955). Hyam and Henshaw's efforts focus on the reasons for the failure of South African expansionism rather than expansionism as a prime motivator for South Africa's foreign policy and its ultimate aim when entering the World Wars (Hyam & Henshaw, 2003; Hyam, 1972; Henshaw, 2009). *The Lion and the Springbok* contains a perceptive chapter dedicated to 'Greater South Africa', which concentrates on South Africa's desire to incorporate the High Commission

Territories (Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland) (Hyam & Henshaw, 2003). Hyam's other offering, *The Failure of South African Expansion*, has a broader sweep and ventures into why South Africa's denial of black political aspirations thwarted South Africa's expansionist desires (Hyam, 1972). Henshaw, in an article titled *South African Territorial Expansion and the International Reaction to South African Racial Policies, 1939 to 1948* (Henshaw, 2009:65-76), deals, in a similar vein, with how South African expansionism was foiled rather than how expansionism was the primary motive behind South African entry into both World Wars.

Simon Katzenellenbogen has produced outstanding work on South Africa and its economic and political relations with Mozambique from the 1880s to 1928 (Katzenellenbogen, 1982). The author offers valuable observations into South African and British attempts to acquire the strategic territory of Delagoa Bay in southern Mozambique. Delagoa Bay was the gateway to the outside world for the landlocked and isolated Boer Republics. While the Boer Republics existed, the British sought to deny them access to Delagoa Bay. Later, the Union looked jealously at the territory to remove the last vestiges of European influence and round off South Africa's territory. Smuts went to great lengths to lay his hand on Delagoa Bay during and after World War I via the conquest of German East Africa. A lacuna exists in historiography for this period.

Anne Samson has synthesised primary and secondary sources to develop expansionism as a motivator for South Africa's participation in World War I (Samson, 2006). The young Union's intervention in German East Africa in 1916 allowed South Africa to 'come of age' and pursue her Imperial interests as an exercise in nationhood. Although the United Kingdom and South Africa harboured different objectives regarding GSWA and GEA, both ultimately desired the conquest of the territory. Smuts skilfully coordinated and integrated Imperial and sub-Imperial aims to achieve both simultaneously. He took political risks in the war, including sending South African troops to GEA in 1916. Besides an obligation of loyalty to the United Kingdom, his primary aim

was nothing less than uniting English and Afrikaners through the acquisition of territory for South Africa and building the prestige of South Africa within the Empire.

Smuts as Defender of the Empire: The Conspiracy Theorists

Smuts was a keen proponent of Empire and an even keener sub-Imperialist with an intense passion for territorial acquisition. His passion for the British Empire remained unbroken except for a brief hiatus from the Jameson Raid (1895) to the end of the Second Anglo Boer War. His quest for a Greater South Africa within the Empire resumed soon after the close of the Second Anglo Boer War. He worked tirelessly with the members of Milner's Kindergarten to bring about the Union of South Africa in 1910. His close association with Rhodes, and later Milner's Kindergarten, has given rise to suggestions that he may have been an inner member of the Kindergarten, especially after the departure of the High Commissioner for Southern Africa, Alfred Milner (1854 to 1925) in 1905. Carroll Quigley, a professor at Georgetown University and an author of books on social history, asserted that the Kindergarten and its various successors played a significant role in recent world history (Quigley, 1981), Some write Quigley off as a mere conspiracy theorist - he has a solid following amongst members of that movement - although he dismisses them and their wild assumptions. Another more recent book making similar assertions and placing Smuts firmly within the inner circle of the Kindergarten is Robin Brown's *The Secret Society* (Brown, 2015). Brown relies heavily on Quigley when asserting Smuts's links with the Kindergarten.

It is debatable as to how much influence the Round Table or The Royal Institute of International Affairs exerted on the role-players of the day or whether Smuts's policy of expansionism owed its origins and sustenance to this 'Rhodesian-Milnerite secret society' (Quigley, 1981). Quigley asserts that Smuts was very much a part of the inner circle of this influential society and, as such, harboured many of its

aims when it came to the Empire. This group frequently used him to enunciate its policies in public, two examples of which were speeches delivered by Smuts in May 1917 and November 1934 (Quigley, 1981:48, 77, 322; Brown, 2015:240). One may speculate on how Rhodes, Milner and the Round Table influenced Smuts, but it is evident that many of the broader aims of Smuts and the Kindergarten were closely aligned. Although similarities existed in these different expansionist streams, there were nuanced and less subtle differences - Smuts came the closest in coordinating these different aims.

The Smuts Biographies

The overwhelming Nationalist fervour that South Africa experienced after 1948 dissuaded Afrikaner authors from Smuts as a topic. Nationalists perceived Smuts as a traitor - a man who preferred the international stage over the liberation and independence of his people, the handmaiden of the British Empire. His pro-British, pro-Empire stance ensured his near disappearance from history in a Nationalist South Africa from 1948 to 1994. Post-apartheid South African democracy has failed to claim him and consigned his role in consolidating the territory of what has become modern South Africa to national amnesia.

Kobus Du Pisani produced an impressive historiographical assessment of published Smuts biographies, which preceded the release of an Afrikaner collaboration (Du Pisani, Kriek & De Jager, 2017), in which he was the editor (Du Pisani, 2016). Du Pisani aimed to assess the historiographical contribution of published Smuts biographies by selecting 19 out of 30 possible biographies. Since 1995, historians have produced merely 65 pages of biographical material of Smuts and his role in World War I. The dearth of contemporary work on Smuts demonstrates the yawning historiographical lacuna relating to his general military contribution during World War I, particularly his World War I in Africa.

The first biography of Smuts belonged to N. Levi. It took the reader from Smuts's birth to the beginnings of

the GEA campaign in 1916. Levi was of Dutch descent and worked as a journalist in South Africa. Smuts was mildly apprehensive about the publication and hoped his would-be biographer would fail in finding a publisher and that the whole enterprise would come to nought (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966:367). Smuts preferred not to read the manuscript even though Levi offered him the opportunity. Levi preferred that Smuts would not influence the text. He was concerned not to damage the image of Smuts's political party (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966:381), Smuts showed little confidence in Levi's enterprise, as by Levi's admittance, he was a rank beginner as a biographer. Smuts suggested that Engelenburg, a South African journalist, newspaper editor, and a close associate, review the manuscript (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966:398, 434). The book's value lies in the fact that Smuts did not influence the final result, representing the opinions of those sympathetic to Smuts living during World War I.

Sarah Millin published a biography of Smuts in 1936, steeped in primary sources and covering his life up to 1917 (Millin, 2001). Millin evolved from a cautious Liberal in 1920 into a fervent supporter of Verwoerd in the 1960s. Millin was a writer and novelist of considerable achievements, but she has fallen out of favour due to her treatment of race, rendering much of her work morally offensive. Her legacy, tainted by her race theories, suffered a similar fate as her biographical subjects, Smuts and Rhodes. J.M. Coetzee notes that her views on race were not out of kilter with the times that she lived in and merely a reflection of respectable scientific and historical thought of that period (Coetzee, 1980:42). Smuts being alive when her biography of him was published somewhat diminished the work, but it still offers an insight into how he was viewed in his times by a biographer of his times.

She gained unprecedented access to his documents through her friendship with Smuts and his family. Millin establishes Smuts's relationship with Rhodes early in the book and reveals that Rhodes's idea of a Greater South Africa was central to Smuts and endured beyond the Jameson Raid and the end of their friendship. The Rhodes-Smuts theme

is present within her book. Considering that '[The] book [was] revised—as to its facts, but not in its opinions—by General Smuts,' one can assume that both men shared similar expansionist visions. Her book comes the closest to revealing Smuts's views on the white and black races and reflects the paternalism, vagueness, and relegation of importance he ascribed to the 'native' question. He took this ambiguity to the grave. Although concise and relatively uncritical, her chapters on Smuts and his World War I provide insights that only her proximity to Smuts could deliver.

Grey Steel, authored by Harold Courtney Armstrong and published in 1937, offers an adverse opinion on Smuts's supposed lack of generalship (Armstrong, 1937). The book's subtitle, *A Study in Arrogance*, reveals the author's adopted position in building his biography of Smuts generally, but more specifically, in assessing his conduct of the GEA campaign. Armstrong served as a junior officer with the Sixth UK Army Division when the Turks captured him during the siege of Kut (1915 to 1916). He languished in captivity until he managed to escape just before the end of the war. After the war, he was posted back to Turkey for some years, where Armstrong remained in constant touch with the Turks, including Mustafa Kemal, and watched the rise of Atatürk's New Turkey. He also wrote *Turkey in Travail* (1925), *Turkey and Syria Reborn* (1930), *Unending Battle* (1934) and *Grey Wolf*, *Lord of Arabia* (1932) (Engelbrecht, 2015). The importance of his Smuts book lies not in its depth of research - for there is little evidence of this - but in the fact that many historians, including renowned ones, have come to rely on Armstrong and his views of Smuts as a general.

It seems peculiar that Armstrong, who had busied himself with Turkish matters for two decades, would turn his subsequent work over to South African politics. A clue to Armstrong's motivation lies in his own words, '[…] there remain untouched by the fury of the iconoclasts only four men – T.E. Lawrence of Arabia, Marshall Foch, Mustafa Kemal of Turkey, and the Jan Christiaan Smuts'. Armstrong took on removing much of the 'flabby nonsense' which historians had

written about Smuts up to that date (Armstrong, 1941:10). Therefore, Armstrong sets about his evangelical task, attacking the cherished beliefs held about Smuts, not least his abilities as a general.

Armstrong fires destructive shots across Smuts's bows and accuses him of being a theoretician in contrast to Botha, a general who considered the human aspects applicable to warfare. He thought Smuts's intellect was a driver for his arrogance, which made him aloof, disdainful, and overly sensitive to criticism (Armstrong, 1941:362). 'Smuts had seen the fight as a chess game on a board. He had not considered personalities; he had not realised how they counted: an army was to him a machine [...]' (Armstrong, 1941:243). Armstrong builds a case for Smuts's impetuosity, amateurishness and inexperience in commanding large forces in the field. His conduct of the campaigns in GSWA and GEA come in for much criticism, and the author does not baulk in describing unflattering incidents involving Smuts for which he offers not a jot of evidence. Historians should have dismissed Armstrong's book as a poorly researched opinion piece. Authors such as Anderson (2004) and Strachan (2004) - they are not alone - have profited from *Grey Steel* by replicating much of its sentiment surrounding Smuts's poor generalship, often using much of the same language.

E.S. Crafford has the honour of being the first Afrikaans-speaking writer to attempt a biography of Smuts (Crafford, 1943). The author claims objectivity by discarding the influences of slanderers and sycophants. He published the book in the same election month in 1943 when Smuts's United Party registered a comfortable win. The book is somewhat concise, and Crafford could not consult Smuts's private papers. He uses the execution of Jopie Fourie (1879 to 1914) and the 1914 Rebellion against the Union government to highlight Smuts's aloofness and callousness, especially when compared to Botha. He devotes a brief chapter to World War I, but few primary sources adorn the book or buttress its scaffolding. Nevertheless, it provides a valuable insight into how an Afrikaner contemporary of Smuts viewed him. Similarly, *Old*

Master by Rene Kraus, gives a narrative in more detail but lacks critical analysis (Kraus, 1944).

Smuts's son, Jannie Smuts, approaches hagiography in accounting for his father's life (Smuts, 1952). It is a mistake to write off all accounts such as these as a one-sided eulogy seeking Smuts's vindication (Du Pisani, 2016:458). Its value lies not so much in its uncritical approach but in the provision of rare glimpses into the personal life of a very private man. The author speaks of the lasting effects of malaria his father contracted in GEA and the terrible blow of losing the election in 1948. The chapters on World War I are more extensive than most and deliver some rare glimpses of the impact of the war on Smuts's personal life. The book contains many primary sources, such as Smuts's speeches and military dispatches. Their place in the narrative gives them context otherwise lacking when encountered in the archive. His proximity to his father may have clouded his objectivity somewhat when dealing with the harsher aspects of his father's career. Still, the same familial ties have given him a vantage point to deliver a unique perspective.

An Australian, Keith Hancock, wrote the best biography to date on Smuts. The book is a product of a massive scholarly exercise to establish the Smuts archive after Smuts died in 1950. Hancock's unreserved admiration of Smuts gives the book a sympathetic tone but is not entirely uncritical of the statesman. In his own words, '[He] has tried not to write about Smuts *and* his times, but to write about [Smuts] *in* his times' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966:xii). This methodology places Smuts firmly within the context of his times, a skill that has eluded many Smuts biographers. Hancock's work is one of only a few based on an in-depth utilisation and analysis of the personal papers of Smuts housed at the South African National Archives in Pretoria. From this point of view, few works surpass it. Extensive reliance on deep archival sources and comprehensive coverage of Smuts's career renders it *locus classicus*. Hancock's fervent wish that future historical endeavour would produce an excellent new biography of Smuts has not come to fruition (Hancock, 1962, 1968). However, it

does have flaws, especially when dealing with Smuts and his 'native policy' or lack of one. De Kiewiet said, 'Smuts made no creative contribution to the native question' (De Kiewiet, 1956:18). Furthermore, Hancock's reliance on Smuts's copious correspondence has marginalised role-players with whom Smuts did not keep up correspondence, such as Botha, Denys Reitz, and Jan Hofmeyr.

In 1999, Albert Grundlingh predicted a 'Smuts renaissance' in South African studies. He quotes Saul Dubow and Shula Marks, who, when reflecting on Keith Hancock's two-volume biography on Smuts, identified 'Renewed interest via - his theories of holism, his environmental and scientific concerns and his exemplification of a particular tradition of white South African identity - suggest that Hancock's Smuts will be continued to be studied with profit'. Grundlingh optimistically forecasted that the end of South Africa's isolation and her re-joining the Commonwealth would usher in an era where historians would again highlight Smuts's political role on the world stage (Grundlingh, 1999:352). Grundlingh's predictions of a resurgence in interest in Smuts have not come to pass. Academics have somewhat debunked Smuts's philosophy of holism, and politicians have written off his legacy as irrelevant in the new democratic South Africa. Recent attempts by Afrikaner scholars to claim Smuts for Afrikanerdom seem to have been stillborn (Du Pisani et al., 2017).

Piet Meiring, a political journalist and Director of State Information, predates Du Pisani et al. in their attempts to reclaim Smuts for the Afrikaners (Meiring, 1975). His viewpoint is that of an Afrikaner Nationalist. Meiring identified the outbreak of World War I and the execution of Jopie Fourie as Smuts's departure and alienation from the Afrikaner fold. The timing of Meiring's book coincided with the increasing isolation that South Africa was beginning to endure internationally. In reclaiming Smuts for South Africa and the Afrikaner, the book sought to remind the reader of when South Africa occupied a significant place on the international stage,

due mainly to Smuts and his statesmanship. The book adds few new insights into Smuts or his generalship in World War I.

Bernard Friedman, a co-founder of the Progressive Party, was formerly a member of the United Party under Smuts. Friedman resigned his seat in protest over the United Party's refusal to pledge the restoration of coloured voters on the Common Roll in 1955. Friedman adopted a more critical stance of Smuts compared to Millin and Hancock (Friedman, 1975). Friedman deals with three main aspects of Smuts's career. These are his role in the formation of the Union in 1910, his reconciliation with Hertzog via the Fusion Government, and his role as leader of the United Party and Prime Minister from 1945 to 1948, leading up to the shocking loss of power to the Nationalists under Malan in 1948. The book does not deal with the military aspects of Smuts's career. Friedman castigates Smuts for his paternalistic treatment of black people and failing to make adequate provision for their political aspirations. He accuses Smuts of giving Prime Minister J.B.M. Hertzog the two-thirds parliamentary majority required to remove African voters in the Cape from the Common Roll in 1936. Smuts's last three years in office, ending in 1948, lacked a vision for black political aspirations, and he failed to lead the way for his voters in finding a solution.

Arguably, the best post-Hancock biography is the one produced by Kenneth Ingham, a professor at Bristol University (Ingham, 1986:212). His distance from Smuts in time and space made Ingham more critical than previous biographers. However, according to Shula Marks, Ingham's book fails to deliver anything new to the pool of knowledge. It fails to adequately address Smuts's deep-seated racism or his inability to progress and solve the 'native' question (Marks, 2001:212). The lesson to be learnt by a would-be biographer is that attempts to produce a modern-day biography must address Smuts's policy towards black people, and the excuse of contextualising him as a man of his time no longer suffices. Importantly for this study, Ingham deals briefly with Smuts's campaign in GEA and, with little analysis or understanding, concludes that Smuts was indeed out of his depth.

Piet Beukes, a prominent South African journalist and a deputy director of the Bureau of Information during World War II, enjoyed personal contact with Smuts and much admired him. He produced a series of books that contained elements of a biography by dissecting Smuts's personality and his relationships with women, holism, religion, and botany (Beukes, 1989, 1992, 1994, 1996). The publication date of these books coincides with the transitional period before the advent of South Africa's democratic dispensation in 1994. During this period, the Nationalist Government funded a somewhat cynical movement to enlighten the international community about South Africa's contribution to defending the West. The Ashanti series, discussed below, was part of a similar cynical effort during the same period to remind the West of South Africa's participation at their side during their times of need. Beukes never produced a work on the military Smuts.

Anthony Lentin focused on Smuts's role at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference (Lentin, 2010). Unlike Richard Steyn, who entirely dispenses with primary documentation, Lentin relies heavily, if not exclusively, on two published primary sources, The *Smuts Papers* and the *British documents on foreign affairs–reports and papers from the Foreign Office*. His book contains a relatively thin bibliography without any reference to academic articles, such as those of Shula Marks (2001), Saul Dubow (2008) and Martin Legassick (1995), the most vociferous modern critics of Smuts's character and career. By ignoring academic articles, he misses an opportunity to deal with the cutting edge of research on Smuts and their harsh criticism, and by doing so, the book becomes a hagiography at worst and a eulogy at best.

Richard Steyn delivers a modern account of Smuts and, at the outset, openly states his journalist methodology. Rather than 'bury [himself] in research for the next few years and produce a thick tome that would gather dust on the shelves,' he was guided by 'an academic of renown' to produce a short and less daunting book' (Steyn, 2015:ix). As a result, he has created a popular history, 'a sort of journalism about the past in which the story and the characters are the key elements, and

the argument is secondary'. The path Steyn has travelled may have resulted in an easy read but amounts to nothing more than a rehash of the secondary sources. His approach has little chance of discovering the 'essence of the man' as demanded by Nasson, (2018) and as a result, adds little to the existing pool of knowledge. In the same category as 'historic journalism' is the latest campaign history on GSWA by Adam Cruise titled *Louis Botha's War* (2015. Also see Cruise et al., 2013). This type of book has a place serving as a primer to pique interest in a long-forgotten period in our history. However, other than raising curiosity, it failed to add to the body of knowledge on the subject and was probably not intended to.

The recent collaboration of Afrikaner historians has reversed a long-standing trend and produced a work that seeks to reclaim Smuts into the Afrikaner fold. Du Pisani, Kriek and De Jager deliver an academic reappraisal of Smuts from a distinctly Afrikaans perspective (Du Pisani et al., 2017). Pertinent to this study is Andre Wessels's chapter on Smuts and World War I (2017). Wessels does not deliver beyond what is available in the secondary sources. He relies too heavily on published material rather than primary sources, as witnessed by his endnotes. The result, combined with historical errors, amounts to a missed opportunity. Fransjohan Pretorius's chapter on Smuts in the Second Anglo Boer War gives insight into Smuts's evolution as a military leader (2017). However, this relies heavily on Keith Hancock and suffers from a scarcity of primary sources. The book offers few new insights, especially about Smuts in World War I, and its significance lies in the fact that it is an exclusively Afrikaner effort to reclaim Smuts. The quality of the chapter contributions falls short of Du Pisani's initial criteria regarding over-reliance on secondary documentation on the biographies he studied (Du Pisani, 2016).

Africa in World War I: No longer a sideshow!

The crafters of 'new' military history have a natural aversion to 'drum and trumpet' regimental and official histories

(Corvisier, 1979; Hale, 1985; Keegan, 1983). New military history avoids politics, great men and an over-reliance on primary documentation. It emphasises society, a narrative where the little people or the underdogs have a voice. The focus is on history from the bottom-up. Social historians have played a significant role in revealing aspects sometimes ignored by traditional historians. The roles of women, black people, family, labour, and religion have been given their rightful place alongside histories of campaigns, battles, and great men (Citino, 2007). However, military history demands a high level of military expertise. A reconstruction of events with a top-down approach is necessary to reveal strategic and operational considerations. Social history should and can live side-by-side with conventional military histories as the disciplines, contrary to some opinion, are not mutually exclusive. Social historians have led the way in placing World War I in Africa back on the agenda, where traditional military historians have abdicated.

Traditional histories have ignored the impact of World War I in / on Africa and treated the campaigns fought there as a mere sideshow. The myopic diminution of everything other than the Western Front has adversely affected the quality and quantity of literature on the subject. Africa and the campaigns fought on the African continent are not the only victims of general amnesia. Many Africans and Asians filled the ranks of the Allied armies fighting in Europe, and historians seldom write the history of their sacrifices in the carnage of the trenches on the Western Front. The wave of 'new' military history in the latter part of the twentieth century has travelled some way to redressing an overwhelming Eurocentric focus.

Pioneering authors have kept the memory flames flickering despite the absence of interest compared to the Western Front. The low volumes of historiography on the subject are unwarranted as the African campaigns constitute an enormous effort despite the massive human disaster that overtook Europe. Tragically, Africa's role in World War I is all but forgotten, especially in those African countries where the actual battles took place. In contrast, public interest

surrounding World War I in Europe has strengthened, and each successive anniversary ushers in reinvigorated interest. The World War I centenary in 2014 witnessed a deluge of conferences, accompanied by numerous papers, monographs and hundreds of books of a general nature, together with a plethora of work discussing the minutiae of uniforms, weapons, and medals. Despite enjoying a revival in the late 1970s and again in the early 2000s, the war in Africa remains on the historical periphery. Although Smuts played a central role in the affairs of the Empire in Africa, its history remains shrouded in the general amnesia surrounding the subject.

The first publications partially reversing this trend appeared in 1978, resulting from a conference held at the University of London on World War I in Africa. The papers presented at the conference acknowledged that the war in East Africa was a fraction of the Western Front's human and economic cost. However, its impact was no less devastating and signalled a significant change for Africa's inhabitants (Rathbone, 1978:9). The conference gave impetus to Geoffrey Hodges, who presented a paper on *African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa* (Hodges, 1978), In addition, he published a work, *Kariakor*, revealing the appalling cost to the African porters used and abused by both sides in the war (Hodges, 1999). Additional papers emerging from the conference were, *World War I Conscription and Social Change in Guinea* (Summers & Johnson, 1978); *France, Africa, and the First World War* (Andrew & Kanya-Forstner, 1978); *Repercussions of World War I in the Gold Coast* (Killingray, 1978); *East African Christians and World War I* (Pirouet, 1978). Melvin Page published *The War of Thangata: Nyasaland and The East African Campaign* and *Africa and the First World War*, a further milestone in revealing Africa in World War I. Page then produced a monograph on the devastating effect of the war on Malawians in World War I titled *The Chiwaya War* (Page, 1978, 2000). Finally, *The South African Native Labour Contingent* by Willan broached a sensitive topic for the first time. It could be considered groundbreaking for a piece on South Africa and its race relations in wartime (Willan, 1978).

David Olusoga points out that '... World War I was the first true world war in which peoples and nations from across the globe fought and laboured alongside one another ...' (Olusogo, 2014). Olusoga is one of few commentators who have returned to history an aspect of the war deliberately and myopically ignored for close to a century. Similar authors have introduced the fact that the war involved more than just white Europeans fighting in Europe and that its devastation reached all corners of the world. Albert Grundlingh predated Olusoga and delivered an innovative book steeped in archival sources about black South Africans and black South African soldiers in World War I (Grundlingh, 1987), Grundlingh produced the book in a political climate that was anything but conducive to honouring the black military experience. His work draws attention to the sharp contrast between Smuts and von Lettow-Vorbeck and their different treatment of black soldiers. The Germans had few qualms about using black people as fully-fledged soldiers who formed the backbone of the *Schutztruppen* in GEA. Smuts reluctantly deployed black people in non-combatant roles. Grundlingh has updated his work with substantial changes to the 'style and substance' of the original material, adding chapters on the Cape Coloured Corps and the SS *Mendi* and extending the narrative shortly beyond World War I to include the Paris Peace Accord (Grundlingh, 2014).

Michelle Moyd examines the role of black people in the war. Using the lens of the GEA *Schutztruppe*, she explores the motivation and exploitation of black soldiers in the white colonial German army (Moyd, 2014, 2008). German askaris were a highly effective military force that maintained discipline and morale even under adverse conditions. Moyd explains where others have failed, the social dynamics behind askari 'loyalty'. She reveals the German ability to exploit the askari's dependence on status and prestige derived from soldiering in a mutually beneficial relationship. Predating Moyd and a pioneer on the subject was Michael von Herff, who provided one of the first insights into the formidable fighting prowess of the askari and how the Germans could

align the askari's personal goals with those of the German administration (Von Herff, 1991).

Personal Reminiscences

Fortunately, after the war, the production of personal reminiscences laid a solid historiographical foundation dealing with World War I in Africa. Historians have underutilised these personal accounts, preferring, as will be seen, to rely heavily on the skewed memoirs of Richard Meinertzhagen to the detriment of objectivity (Meinertzhagen, 1960). Senior officers and other ranks in the campaign have contributed, giving top and bottom views of the campaign. Political accounts are of value as they provide insight into the complex political mood of the times. Taken together, they offer a valuable tapestry of the events witnessed by those present. A barrier to accessing these accounts is that many are out-of-print and relatively difficult to obtain.

One of the first publications to appear for public consumption was a book published by Brigadier-General J.H.V. Crowe, who commanded the artillery in East Africa under General Smuts. He published an account of the campaign, *General Smuts's Campaign in East Africa*, in 1918. By the author's admission, it constitutes little more than a diary of the campaign's events (Crowe, 1918). The book avoids any controversy, and the fact that Smuts wrote the foreword precluded a critical analysis of his conduct in the campaign. Interestingly, Smuts pays generous tribute to the enemy, von Lettow-Vorbeck, in his foreword (dated February 1918) even though the war was not yet over. His motivation offers reasons for the failure to completely rout the Germans and points to the dangers of allowing them to retain the colony to the detriment of the security of the entire Empire. By generously paying tribute to von Lettow-Vorbeck, Smuts cleverly enhances his military prowess by constructing a worthy foe. Interestingly, this may be the first instance that gave birth to the legend of von Lettow-Vorbeck (Crowe, 1918:xvi).

The personal reminiscences of Brigadier-General C.P. Fendall, *The East African Force 1915-1919*, published in 1921, form an absorbing history of the GEA campaign (Fendall, 2006). As a member of the Imperial staff, he served under both Smuts and Lieutenantt-General Jacob van Deventer. Fendall provides solid insights into the administrative and logistical challenges faced by the British forces and the effects these challenges had on combat and movement. He details the British force by describing and analysing the administration, medical support, supply and transport, and the 'native' military service. He examined local political conditions, the climate and terrain, and an overall assessment of the campaign. His evaluation of Smuts's martial abilities and limitations are fair and, significantly, run against the tide of past and contemporary commentary. Fendall's campaign assessment is well-considered and achieves a balance seldom replicated by later historians.

The colourful Deneys Reitz was present at significant events of the Second Anglo Boer War, the 1914 Rebellion against the Union government, the GSWA campaign, the GEA campaign and finally, the Western Front. He wields a deft writing hand, and his personal experiences and sincerity make for riveting reading. He enjoyed a healthy relationship with Smuts, and his observations in *Trekking On* give further insight into the character and essence of the man (Reitz, 1933). In a similar vein is Piet van der Byl's autobiography *From Playgrounds to Battlefields* (1971) (Van der Byl, 1971). He served in both the GSWA and GEA campaigns, and his memories of Smuts and Botha are valuable. Another serviceman, P.J. Pretorius, an intelligence officer, reveals intriguing aspects of the GEA campaign under Smuts in his book *Jungle Man*, published in 1948 (Pretorius, 2001). Both these accounts add to the immediacy of the narrative by providing a first-hand record of events as witnessed by the participants.

James Bourhill has built his history on the GEA campaign using the personal accounts of his family and others that he came across in the William Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand (Bourhill, 2015). He blends

the accounts with a concise campaign history, but the result is less than satisfactory when he quotes verbatim swathes of Meinertzhagen and Reitz. In addition, Bourhill claims to have 'trawled' the South African Department of Defence Archives (hereafter DOD Archives) and found their holdings of GSWA and GEA documents to be 'insignificant compared to other campaigns' (Bourhill, 2015:9). It is an astounding assertion in the face of the 670+ documentation boxes on GEA and the 860+ documentation boxes on GSWA held at the Documentation Centre, according to Evert Kleynhans (2016).

Many published personal accounts deal with various aspects of the war in GSWA and GEA that explain the human condition seen by eyewitnesses during the war. Although highly subjective, they present valuable opportunities for researchers to reconstruct the events via first-hand accounts. Historians must scour the narratives and search for the witting and unwitting evidence. Personal accounts provide much value when read together and after applying a degree of triangulation (Boydell, 1948; Young, 1935; Walker & Wienholt, 2013; Downs, 2012; Dolbey, 2007; Moore & Robinson, 2013; Buchanan, 2008; Child, 1973; Rainer, 1940; Blackwell, 1971, 1938).

'Drum and trumpet': Official, semi-official, and regimental histories

Contemporary 'new' historians tend to suspect official histories. According to them, they lack balance, are uncritical, are biased, and possess an agenda to support a particular personality and political viewpoint. These criticisms are fair, and historians must treat official histories cautiously. Meant to be the 'first word' on a specific campaign; they end up as the final word in many cases. The official and semi-official histories surrounding World War I have a particular context. The official history has traditionally been a campaign narrative used as a tool by the staff colleges to provide lessons learnt. Total war from 1914 to 1918 changed the paradigm, as traumatised populations demanded an explanation for the

extraordinary sacrifices of so many soldiers during the war. In South Africa, there was a realisation that the official history would have to be a good read and serve as a nation-building exercise. Although trained soldiers were not ideal, four out of the five official historians were serving officers of the UDF (Van der Waag, 2016). The official historians encountered many challenges in their efforts, from lack of centralised records, political constraints, and a need to produce a narrative that served nation-building. Nevertheless, despite limitations and pandering to political agendas, there is much contained in the official histories of value to the historian (Grey, 2003a).

The first official history of Southa Africa's participation in World War I, dealing with aspects of the war in Africa, appeared in 1924 and was compiled by a team of historians, one of whom was Major J.G.W. Leipoldt, a land surveyor who served as an intelligence officer (General Staff, Defence Headquarters, Pretoria, 1924). This general history remained the only single volume dealing with South Africa's entire war effort during World War I until Nasson published *Springboks on the Somme* in 2007 (Van der Waag, 2003:34; Nasson, 2007). The book deals briefly with the 1914 Rebellion against the Union government, GSWA, and GEA campaigns. It also covers the actions of the UDF in Egypt and France (Leipoldt, 1920). This treatise was somewhat didactic and borrowed much from the work of Buchan (1920), which Agar-Hamilton describes as '... limited in scope and [suffering] from lack of specialised knowledge' (Grey, 2000:254). The historians behind the official histories of this period designed them to teach the lessons of war and explain the sacrifices that the population could be called on to make. However, these publications were somewhat limited in scope and critical analysis due to restricted access to records and the often-amateur nature of the authors. Some historians have come to rely too heavily on the official histories and have succumbed to some of their political obfuscation.

Nineteen years passed before the South Africans produced another official work, authored by Brigadier-General J.J. Collyer, South African Chief of the General Staff at

the end of World War I. Significantly, he had served in both the GSWA and the GEA campaigns with Smuts and had an intimate knowledge of the day-to-day operations from a South African perspective. His first book was *Campaign in German South West Africa, 1914-1915* (Collyer, 1937), and another on the GEA campaign titled *The South Africans with General Smuts in German East Africa 1916* (Collyer, 1939). Some have described these official histories as little more than narrow military chronicles (Grey, 2000:255). Due to the constraints dictated by the times, the South African defence authorities laid down some principles which included 'research under strict supervision' and preferably undertaken by military personnel who supposedly understood the true nature of war (Van der Waag, 2003:28). In no way can these official histories be compared to those published by the Union War Histories Section on World War II. The Union War Histories Section under J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton produced works that were nothing less than *locus classicus* and, in many respects, have yet to be surpassed nearly half a century after the publication. The official histories of World War I are amateurish by comparison and leave a wide gap for researchers to fill. Since official histories are supposedly the first and not the final word, they also play an essential role in organising records for future researchers (Grey, 2003b).

The most comprehensive work on GEA appeared in 1941 as part of the British official histories. The authors partially relied on the work of the South Africans Leipoldt and Collyer and used both publications well (Hordern, 1941). Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Hordern originally meant the official history to consist of two volumes. However, only one volume covered East Africa from August 1914 to September 1916. Volume two, never published, left a lacuna for the period after September 1916 to the end of the war. A further shortcoming of the entire series of British official histories was the absence of any material on the campaign in GSWA. The whole British official history enterprise eventually amounted to 28 volumes and fell under the responsibility of Brigadier-General Sir James Edmonds. Just as in the case of South Africa, the British

endeavour was military-orientated, didactic in approach, and viewed events through a robust military lens rather than a social one. Not designed for a general readership, it served the needs of the military Staff College instruction (Grey, 2000:254).

Appearing somewhat belatedly in the early 1990s as part of the Ashanti series were three semi-official histories dealing with World War I in Africa. Controversially, the South African Government funded their publication primarily for political reasons to curry favour with the West (Van der Waag, 2003:42). The first deals with the South African campaign in GSWA and relies heavily on official histories, specifically Collyer's. The author Gerald L'Ange, an accomplished journalist, offers few new insights or critical analysis (L'Ange, 1991). The second book in the series, by J.A. Brown, deals with the South African campaign in GEA in 1916 (Brown, 1991). Again, he relies heavily on the official histories produced 50 to 60 years earlier and rehashed published secondary sources. Both works show little evidence of archival sources and fail to build on the foundation laid by the official histories produced decades before. Ian Gleeson's book on black, Indian, and coloured soldiers courageously covers an aspect of the war that was neither well-researched nor reported on before that time (Gleeson, 1994). The best in the Ashanti series, unfortunately not dealing with Africa, is *Pyramids and Poppies* by Peter Digby, describing the 1st South African Infantry (SAI) Brigade in Libya, France and Flanders (Digby, 1993).

Regimental histories occupy a crucial space in the historiography of a campaign. They record first-hand experiences of different levels of command, from commander to ordinary soldier and the events as they unfolded on the battlefield. Regimental histories deal with the nitty-gritty aspects of waging war and other 'face of battle' aspects omitted elsewhere. They are an indispensable aid to reconstructing the events of a battlefield. They unashamedly have an agenda to create regimental pride, record lessons learnt, or even ensure survival in the face of budgetary cuts in peacetime. The regimental history of the Durban Light

Infantry provides extensive and valuable coverage of the GSWA and GEA campaigns (Martin, 1969). Captain Ivor Difford, the 1st Battalion Cape Corps quartermaster, constructed an entire Cape Corps regimental history, including valuable material regarding its formation, training and eventual GEA deployment (Difford, 2015). Its indispensable value lies in the text that only a person who witnessed first-hand events could have constructed. Historians can find references to the GSWA campaign in the official histories of the Natal Mounted Rifles (Goetzsche, 1971), the Kaffrarian Rifles (Coleman, 1988), the Rand Light Infantry (Simpkins, 1965) and the Kimberley Regiment (Curson, 1963). An explanation for the lack of regimental history on the GEA campaign is that the UDF recruited volunteers instead of traditional regiments.

The 'other side of the hill'

E. Mittler & Sohn published the official history of the Imperial German Army in the war of 1914 to 1918 between 1925 and 1930. It comprised 14 volumes mainly dealing with the war on the Western Front. German official historians published nothing on the GSWA or the GEA campaign. The German point of view emerged when individual participants produced narratives in the absence of official publications. The most famous of these accounts, if not the most informative, were the reminiscences of General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, who conducted a remarkable campaign as commander of the German forces in GEA. He published two books in 1920 describing in some detail his experiences on the campaign in GEA (Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 1920b). Von Lettow-Vorbeck's next book highlighted his life before and after the campaign in GEA (Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 1957). These reminiscences provide a fascinating insight into the campaign's conduct from 'the other side of the hill'. They helped establish von Lettow-Vorbeck as a cult figure in German circles and amongst his former opponents, including Smuts and Meinertzhagen. The self-serving nature of these narratives must be kept in mind, especially when their authors designed them to enhance and, at other times, to protect reputations.

Von Lettow-Vorbeck overshadowed the Governor of GEA, Heinrich Schnee; hence, historians often overlook the latter. Schnee was responsible for building and maintaining the colony's infrastructure during his governorship from 1912 to 1919. An enormous tussle between Schnee and von Lettow-Vorbeck ensued at the outbreak of the war as to the future conduct of the campaign. Schnee was more concerned with protecting the assets and white settlers of the colony than with conducting a pointless war. He pursued neutrality for as long as possible, hoping for a short war in which Germany would emerge victoriously. Von Lettow-Vorbeck, in contrast, was belligerent and was keen to pursue an aggressive war and distract the Allies from their primary military effort on the Western Front. Schnee's economic and social policies before the war helped create a robust environment where von Lettow-Vorbeck operated. As a result, he played a more significant role in the campaign than commonly suggested, and his contribution to the vigorous defence of the colony is due for reassessment. His books have not been translated into English, hindering English historians (Schnee, 1919). However, his diary from November 1917 to November 1918 is available in English at the National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA).

An essential semi-official German source is a young German staff officer, Ludwig Boell, who served under von Lettow-Vorbeck during the East Africa campaign. He produced the closest product to German official history in the wake of the destruction of the Colonial Office (CO) records during the Allied bombing of Germany during World War II. In April 1945, the Royal Air Force bombed Potsdam and destroyed the National Archive warehouse and countless priceless documents. Boell made extensive use of these documents and first-hand accounts before their destruction. Historians cannot test the German official and regimental histories of World War I against original documents to build a foundation for further research. Fortunately, Boell completed his monumental history of the East African campaign in 1944 and privately published it in 1951 (Boell, 1951). His literary estate, held in the modern-day *Bundesarchiv*, amounts to over 13 000

documents - a veritable treasure trove for German speakers! A reading of Boell gives a German perspective on the campaign's effectiveness in GEA waged by Smuts. Dr Hans von Oelhafen published his semi-official *Der Feldzug in Sudwes 1914/15*, covering the GSWA campaign from a German perspective, and this study has made use of translations of significant events in the text (Von Oelhafen, 1923).

Ludwig Deppe covers interesting medical aspects of the GEA campaign from the German side. The Germans enjoyed a medical advantage as the best doctors in exotic diseases researched East Africa when the war broke out. Disease rather than combat proved to be the number one killer and maimer of soldiers and porters from both sides, and relatively effective treatments gave the Germans the edge in maintaining their fighting power. A medical doctor, Deppe, initially headed the hospital at Tanga and accompanied von Lettow-Vorbeck on the campaign. His book delivers his experiences as a field doctor and other non-medical aspects of the campaign, such as the terrain, supplies, combat losses and morale. Historians have made little use of this book due to its unavailability in English (Deppe, 1919).

James Stejskal has written a modern traditional campaign history on the GSWA campaign (Stejskal, 2014). He claims to use German sources held at the Namibian National Archive, such as the diary of the German commander Victor Franke and the unpublished German official history, together with other German personal accounts. Due to the language barrier, the ability to access German accounts gives the author an advantage over the traditional British historians. However, the author failed to consult the extensive collection of papers held by the DOD Archives and missed an opportunity to support the text with primary documentation from the South African side.

World War I in Africa: Campaign Histories

As a natural progression and building on the foundations of official works was the emergence of campaign histories in the

1960s, the earliest of which followed a 'drum and trumpet' style of military history. Typically Eurocentric, they overtly admired von Lettow-Vorbeck's exploits while being somewhat dismissive of the Allied efforts to subdue him, including that of Smuts. As a result, these works appeared as popular history instead of scholarly work or work based on military expertise. Amongst the first was Brian Gardner's *German East: The Story of the First World War in Africa* (Gardner, 1963), followed a year later by Leonard Mosley's *Duel for Kilimanjaro*. The inside dust jacket of the latter adequately describes, with journalistic sensationalism, the uncritical adoration for von Lettow-Vorbeck. It tells of impossible odds – 11 000 German and native askari troops against a British Army of 200 000 men – and of the German commander, Colonel von Lettow-Vorbeck, who made the odds meaningless (Mosely, 1964).

Next to appear in a similar vein, short on bibliography and footnotes but long on sensationalism, was J.R. Sibley's stirring but inappropriately named *Tanganyikan Guerrilla* (1973). Again, the author liberally applies Meinertzhagen to his narrative influence, especially his take on Smuts's performance. The description on the dust jacket reveals his bias and intent.

His strength of character, drive and outstanding professional ability were the major factors in one of the most successful guerrilla campaigns ever waged. This is the consensus of opinion, then and now, on Germany's General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, one of the few popular heroes to emerge from World War I (Sibley, 1973).

The most readable of all these works, but not the most scholarly, is Charles Miller's *Battle for the Bundu* (Miller, 1974). The author makes no pretensions to any scholarly or military expertise. He admits to 'drawing heavily on the literary licence and educated guesswork'. He lays the blame for the lack of scholarly enterprise squarely at the door of 'documentary disorder'. He finds the numerous conflicting accounts of the battles to be so overwhelming to render them irretrievably confusing. Miller, in admitting that correlating

and collating battlefield experiences from different viewpoints was beyond his capability or intention (all in a day's work for a military historian), unsurprisingly perpetuates the now well-entrenched guerrilla myth. He describes,

> ' [...] a midget German force led by an obscure Prussian officer who could have conducted post-graduate courses in irregular warfare tactics for Che Guevara, General Giap, and other more celebrated but far less skilled guerilla fighters.' (Miller, 1974:x).

A book by Edwin Hoyt, appropriately titled *Guerrilla* (Hoyt, 1981), continues propagating the now popular guerrilla theme. The author describes von Lettow-Vorbeck as the 'German David'. The fact that von Lettow-Vorbeck's typical German way of war had little to do with guerrilla warfare did not deter this author nor those previous or after him from propagating that illusion. Von Lettow-Vorbeck commanded a regular army trained in traditional warfare and organised along conventional military structures. His style of warfare, manoeuvre warfare, falls soundly within and forms the cornerstone of traditional German manoeuvre doctrine.

East Africa was the one area of the world where the Germans, in effect, won their war, and *Guerrilla* reveals the military genius responsible, von Lettow-Vorbeck, who never commanded more than a few thousand men yet bested 20 times that number of highly trained British regulars in some of the most dramatic and exciting battles of modern military history (Hoyt, 1981).

The numerical disparity of the opposing forces has inspired the myth of von Lettow-Vorbeck fighting an irregular guerrilla-type war. Hoyt depicts the South Africans as excessively racist and dismissive of the askari military abilities before they suffered their first reversal at their hands at Salaita Hill in February 1916. The delicious irony of racist Boers in the form of South African soldiers being defeated by the black troops they despised and referred to as 'K.....' is

another construct of Meinertzhagen that has persisted and is a common theme appearing in many books.

Byron Farwell published the first book covering the entire war in Africa in a single volume titled *The Great War in Africa* (Farwell, 1986). His piece on Botha's conquest of GSWA contains vast swathes from Trew's *Botha Treks* (Trew, 1936). His unreferenced text includes a 'select' bibliography, which includes Trew's book. Farwell's book contains refreshing departures from his predecessors, being more measured in its cult of personality. He places von Lettow-Vorbeck's ability to survive the campaign in a more meaningful context using a style reminiscent of 'new history' but decades before its advent.

' [....] Lettow-Vorbeck was indeed a brilliant soldier who invoked universal admiration, for men admire bravery, endurance, persistence, courtesy in adversity and dignity in defeat. All these are qualities which he exemplified. He succeeded in what he set out to do, yet what he did was in the end worse than useless, for he could not prevent the victory of his country's enemies; he cost the lives of thousands and the health of tens of thousands more. He tore the social fabric of hundreds of communities and wrecked the economy of three countries. His splendid military virtues were devoted to an unworthy cause and his loyalty given to a bad monarch.' (Farwell, 1986:355; Vandervort, 2009).

Farwell has a more balanced approach when assessing Smuts in GEA and paints a picture of a man who brought decisive leadership and determination to remove von Lettow-Vorbeck from British territory and later from German territory. Smuts, frustrated at not bringing the enemy to a decisive battle, could at least boast the capture of a substantial amount of territory, especially when measured against the minuscule territorial gains in Europe (Farwell, 1986:261).

Besides Farwell, the above popular accounts presented viewpoints based on misinterpretation, shoddy research, and a solid foundation of myth. The authors placed excessive reliance on the diaries of Meinertzhagen, whose evidence

may be unreliable in the light of his exposure in 2007 as a fraud (Meinertzhagen, 1960; Garfield, 2007). Further distractions hindering a balanced account were the widely circulated and self-serving account of von Lettow-Vorbeck. His reminiscences were overly influential in the absence of material contradicting his viewpoint (Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 1920a, 1957). The heroic figure portrayed by von Lettow-Vorbeck has submerged the other personalities involved in the war in Africa, particularly that of Smuts.

Another theme dominating the historiography beyond the official histories is Smuts's portrayal as an amateur and indifferent military commander at the operational level. Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, who served as an intelligence officer in GEA, can be credited with the fact that, despite the overwhelming amount of contrary evidence, his portrayal of an inept Smuts out of his depth as a general persists. Meinertzhagen offered a harsh criticism of the conduct of the war in East Africa in general and Smuts's lack of ability in particular. Contemporary historians have taken his often-baseless assessments on board uncritically, and Meinertzhagen's jaded viewpoint has occupied the prime position in their publications (Meinertzhagen, 1960). Meinertzhagen may have constructed his diaries some years after the events, emphasising the importance of corroborating evidence and not relying too much on one man's word. Nevertheless, his viewpoint has become profoundly entrenched after a century of being accorded the centrepiece in any military assessment of Smuts. Brian Garfield exposed Meinertzhagen as a fraud in 2007, but this came too late for some history heavyweights to modify their views on Smuts (Garfield, 2007).

Hancock's monumental biography of *Smuts: The Sanguine Years 1870 – 1919* displays how to treat Meinertzhagen by using corroborating and contradictory material to assess and place evidence in a proper context (Hancock, 1962, 1968). Hancock acknowledges Meinertzhagen but identifies his viewpoints in context by examining an overwhelming amount of contradictory evidence of Smuts's campaign performance.

He deftly achieves this without diminishing Meinertzhagen's character but by producing evidence that Botha and the British highly valued Smuts's military leadership and abilities.

Hew Strachan produced a book on World War I in Africa. As such, this thin volume describes military operations in a broader context, rarely delving into the details of individual battles (Strachan, 2004). Refreshingly, Strachan debunks decades-old mythology surrounding von Lettow-Vorbeck. That von Lettow-Vorbeck fought genuine guerrilla warfare is repudiated, as well as his goal of tying up Entente troops destined for Europe. Von Lettow-Vorbeck's efforts were ineffectual since South African troops were unlikely to have been deployed out of Africa. However, Strachan's treatment of Smuts lacks the same enlightened revision, and like Ross Anderson, he relies heavily on the myth created by Meinertzhagen and Armstrong. Strachan denigrates Smuts's approach to manoeuvre warfare and accuses him of adopting enveloping manoeuvres rather than direct attacks. Strachan talks rather caustically regarding Smuts's desire to manoeuvre rather than fight. However, the same strategy developed by von Lettow-Vorbeck, leading to the loss of most of the territory of GEA, receives kinder treatment from the author (Strachan, 2004:137). Smuts stands accused of seeking to prevent the carnage of the Western Front battlefields and making political rather than military decisions to avoid casualties, which would have been politically unacceptable back in South Africa. Strachan criticises Smuts's practice of placing himself well forward and close to the action. The author reveals his predilection for the British way of war, where the higher command structures were safely ensconced well to the rear. Strachan condemns the very military traits which would have found favour amongst the Germans. He examines Smuts's generalship through a very British military lens and, by doing so, has failed to achieve a balanced, objective viewpoint as to the conduct of his campaign (Strachan, 2004:131-138).

Contemporary South African historians are not exempt from portraying Smuts as a mediocre general. Bill Nasson in *Springboks on the Somme* describes Smuts as being 'obsessively

ambitious' whose 'reach was forever exceeding his grasp' and 'having a higher opinion than most of his command abilities…'. Nasson describes the skulduggery behind Smuts's appointment to the supreme command of the British East African forces, describing Smuts as nothing more than a parliamentary politician with limited military experience. Nasson joins hands with Ross Anderson in expressing Smuts's appointment as 'highly unusual' because he commanded only a fraction of the troops in the Second Anglo Boer War in familiar terrain and 'easy' climatic conditions (Nasson, 2007:96,97; Strachan, 2004:135).

With equal vigour, Nasson castigates Smuts's overall strategic and operational plan for the campaign's conduct in GEA. He finds little merit in Smuts's idea to conduct a manoeuvre warfare campaign using flanking, encircling manoeuvres, and utilising numerical superiority to dislodge the enemy. According to Nasson, Smuts's feeble attempts to surround his enemy always came to nought when a far more capable and cannier, von Lettow-Vorbeck, could evade encirclement and trade space for survival. Nasson condemns Smuts's handling of his casualties caused by the harsh, disease-ridden terrain. Nasson dismisses that Smuts controlled 90% of the former German colony at the end of 11 months of campaigning. To him, the control of territory was inconsequential in the face of the battered askari remnants remaining to carry on the fight (Nasson, 2007:98-118, 2014).

Nasson stands on firmer ground when he tackles the impact of the war on South African society. His *WWI and the people of South Africa* is a fascinating and highly readable insight into the social impact of South Africa's entry into the war. He reveals his disdain for the official and regimental histories, which military historians should use as a foundation from whence to build. John Buchan, the official historian of South Africa's campaign in France, is dismissed as a propagandist having a 'much-cultivated image … of an imperial man of action', then, 'secretive and showy,' and an 'ardent imperialist'. When dealing with characters such as Botha, he accuses Buchan of '… leaving history and entering

a realm of Buchanesque fiction'. One could sum up Nasson's view of Buchan's efforts as '... congenial interpretations of South African wartime experience' (Nasson, 2007:205-218).

Nasson embraces the value of personal accounts with equal and opposite vigour. He seems to regard these two essential aspects of reconstructing history as mutually exclusive (Van der Waag, 2016). However, this bottom-up approach will never unlock the mysteries of the higher levels of war, as the unfortunate participant views events through a keyhole. The official historian has access to the memoirs and orders of the men in charge, giving an overview of the battle. At best, an eyewitness account by an ordinary soldier will provide insight into the tactical situation of a minor engagement. At the same time, the operational and strategic levels are beyond his comprehension. Narratives can blend personal reminiscences and operational aspects derived from official histories and primary documents to produce satisfactory results. Nasson ignores the different levels of war and contrasts ordinary soldiers' reminiscences with those higher up. He uses his conclusion as a stick to beat official history, that '[personal accounts] ... [are] very different from conventional mythologies of enriching personal achievement or heroism' (Nasson, 2007:1852-204).

The Twenty-first-century Historians

British historians were at the forefront of reintroducing the history of World War I in Africa during the twenty-first century's first decade. *The Battle of Tanga* (2001) by Ross Anderson was amongst the first offerings of new insights into the campaign (Anderson, 2001b). Anderson's account of the battle deals with the tactics, or lack thereof, and some helpful observations into German command and control. The subject of his doctoral thesis and subsequent book, *The Forgotten Front (2004),* dealt with the broader campaign of GEA (Anderson, 2001a). His chapters dealing with Smuts's tenure as commander-in-chief do not offer new insights or revisionary material. Instead, Anderson repeats the mantra that he was

inexperienced in leading large forces, inept in arranging his logistics and almost criminally neglectful of the health of the soldiers (Anderson, 2004:111). This view differs little from that of a Meinertzhagen or an Armstrong.

In his book *Tip & Run* (2008), Edward Paice presents a more balanced and considered approach to assessing Smuts's military performance on the campaign in GEA (Paice, 2008). He attempts to explain different points of view on Smuts's performance as a military commander on more occasions than previous authors, benefiting from the insights revealed by Garfield of Meinertzhagen's fraudulent character. His battlefield analysis is more in-depth and less overtly critical, giving cognisance to the problematic conditions beyond the control of the warring parties (Paice, 2008:398). Refreshingly, Paice offers more criticism than most when measuring the German military performance and quotes a Belgian report which ascribes von Lettow-Vorbeck's success solely 'to his ability to withdraw and the use of terror to ensure local support' (Paice, 2008:400).

Anne Samson analyses the political manoeuvring and the motivation behind South Africa's entry into World War I (Samson, 2006). Samson picks up the expansionist thread as one of the central motivations for South Africa's entry into the conflict. Expansionism is a research area that has been neglected or only referred to in passing by some of the more modern authors since the work of Katzenellenbogen (1982), Garson (1955) and Hyam (1972) in the 1970s. She places South Africa's campaign in East Africa as an exercise in nation-building, part of an expansionist agenda by Great Britain, and a sub-Imperialist programme by Smuts. Examining the GEA campaign through a political lens places Smuts in a central role throughout the thesis and de-emphasises the Eurocentric focus of previous works on the campaign. Unfortunately, she relegates the military aspects of the campaigns, concentrating on 'the interrelatedness of policy and strategy in what was happening on the ground and in between'. She focuses on the 'strong personalities' who directed the war at all levels, including Smuts. Samson draws an interesting parallel

between von Lettow-Vorbeck and Smuts and their relationship with their direct superiors, namely Governor Schnee and Prime Minister Louis Botha. However, Samson's glaring weakness lies in military matters, and by her admission, she has left that to others who are more expert. Her suggestion that Smuts was a mediocre military commander is unfounded, given her lack of in-depth critical analysis or expert military knowledge.

Stuart Mitchell provides a fresh look at the military Smuts in GEA (Mitchell, 2014). His work swims against the current British tide and may facilitate swinging the pendulum, which has gone too far the other way. Mitchell applies a higher degree of operational analysis than other modern historians. Smuts was much concerned about his supply difficulties, and Mitchell gives testament to his agony, reversing previous perceptions that he was ignorant and uncaring. Furthermore, his operational conception and way of war were not out of kilter with the *British Field Service Regulations Part I* (Anon, 1909:131-140). They were, in large part, correct for the political and military requirements of the campaign. Mitchell advances sound reasons based on thorough analysis and reopened the debate on Smuts's generalship. Hamish Paterson joins Mitchell as one of the few voices that offer a more balanced approach to Smuts's generalship in GEA. Paterson correctly identifies that most of the criticism of the military Smuts emanates from the diaries of Meinertzhagen. Because of his unmasking as an unscrupulous fraud by Garfield, it is time for a reassessment. Interestingly, Paterson is one of few who have come across Smuts and his first encounter with military life as a volunteer in the Victoria College Volunteer Rifle Corps (Paterson, 2010).

In *The First Campaign Victory of the Great War* (2019), Antonio Garcia considers the GSWA campaign an important case study for manoeuvre warfare theory. Garcia attempts to re-evaluate the GSWA campaign within the framework of manoeuvre theory to determine the cause of victory and defeat (Garcia, 2019:xiv, 53). Garcia identifies that the Germans in GSWA were operating on interior lines of communication while facing a numerically superior foe. Delaying the inevitable would entail concentrating German forces and attacking

each UDF wing in turn. Their extensive railway network and the tactical mobility of their mounted infantry aided German operational mobility (Garcia, 2019:58). Garcia comes unstuck when considering the UDF's use or misuse of exterior lines of communication and their reliance on overwhelming numbers instead of classic manoeuvre warfare. Moreover, his inappropriate use of modern manoeuvre warfare constructs, such as John Boyd's OODA loops and modern American manoeuvre jargon, is distracting. He deflects from the poor planning and chaos the UDF experienced during the first phase of the GSWA campaign. Garcia trivialises the overwhelming numerical superiority the UDF deployed in the second phase and ignores its disastrous effects on logistics. These aspects, overlooked by Garcia, are the antithesis of manoeuvre warfare.

The Battle of Sandfontein on 26 September 1914 in GSWA is a focal point where South African authors and their British counterparts, apparently misled by the official histories, have incorrectly portrayed the operational aspects of the first phase of the GSWA campaign. Warwick introduces an interesting but erroneous notion of Smuts's culpability in ordering Lukin to advance on Sandfontein. He also stresses that Smuts's immediate political considerations in invading GSWA overrode sound strategic and operational concepts. Warwick tends to view generalship and politics as mutually exclusive, where generals have an intimate relationship with and are guided by their country's politics even as far as it influences their nation's way of war (Warwick, 2003).

Ian van der Waag uses Sandfontein to expose the underlying military structure of the UDF and how the battle, in its wake, influenced the UDF's military reform. Van der Waag paints a picture of a UDF inhabiting a contested space of open rivalries, less than competent appointments, a divided command, and non-existent general staff with a lack of trained staff officers (Van der Waag, 2013:7). However, Van der Waag commits an error, as do Strachan, Nasson, Warwick and Garcia, in placing the battle of Sandfontein within the framework of a modified three-prong operational plan whereby he assumes incorrectly that the UDF cancelled

the landings at Walvis Bay / Swakopmund on 21 August 1914. Garcia's analysis of the Sandfontein debacle descends to the tactical level of war when he ignores the fact that the failure of the UDF to occupy Swakopmund in September 1914 placed Col P.S. Beves (1863-1924) (Uys, 1992:18) and Col Tim Lukin (1860–1925) (Uys, 1992:138) in a precarious position at the operational level (Garcia, 2019:67).

With few exceptions, the scholarship of twenty-first century historians has failed to redress and reassess the leadership myths created by the first historical works. These histories have sidestepped the issues of the cult figure of von Lettow-Vorbeck, his mythical guerrilla doctrine, and the incompetence of the Allied generals in the face of a wily adversary. There has been an effort to reduce von Lettow-Vorbeck's military prowess, but not by attacking his ability, but rather to emphasise the futility and destructiveness of his efforts. These histories deemphasise the military aspects of the campaign and focus on the social issues brought about by the war in Africa. Therefore, leadership myths persist unabated and unattended due to military history's unpopularity amongst university-based historians. Rather than being subjected to reconsideration or revision, the military Smuts has continued to endure a reputation given by a rehashing of secondary sources. Historians have recycled each other's prejudices and errors, and we are none the wiser after decades of new publications.

The USA and Its Infatuation with the German way of war

The USA military enjoys a persisting infatuation with von Lettow-Vorbeck and the German way of war, resulting in a crop of academic work emerging from their military academies (Muth, 2011:7). These works tend to be uncritical of the German conduct of the war and lack balance when assessing the Allied efforts. The more rigorous research has its roots in the United Kingdom and South Africa, and some of the top graduates have progressed their theses into books.

An example of the USA military passion for all things German is a research project by Lt-Col John C. Stratis titled *A Case Study in Leadership-Colonel Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck* (Stratis, 2002; Stevens, 1973). His abstract immediately sets the tone in incorrectly describing the campaign as 'guerrilla warfare' and making sweeping statements about von Lettow-Vorbeck's military prowess. He enthusiastically proclaims that 'Studying Lettow-Vorbeck as a gifted military leader who conducted a strategic guerrilla campaign against overwhelming odds and continually won demonstrates how a numerically inferior force can achieve success on the battlefield'. Evidence that this is not a new trend for the military can be found in the Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, in 1930 (Anon, 1930). The text is liberally garnished with accolades for von Lettow-Vorbeck. Its conclusion has set the tone for students at the War College for years afterwards: 'The chief reason why General von Lettow-Vorbeck was able to hold out and avoid capture was in his masterly skill, his unlimited courage, his superb leadership, his infinite resourcefulness, his supreme patience, his unlimited perseverance, and his military genius, as testified to by every historian consulted in the course of this study'.

The theme of valuable lessons learnt from von Lettow-Vorbeck in operational art and asymmetrical warfare has persisted at the United States Army Command and General Staff College. The title, *Askaris, Asymmetry, and Small Wars: Operational Art and the German East African Campaign, 1914-1918* (Adgie, 2001), reveals the high esteem that the USA staff colleges hold for von Lettow-Vorbeck. The author contends that 'Lettow-Vorbeck's campaign is not anachronistic' and that his operational art in conducting an asymmetric campaign is valid in modern times. Just as instructive is a thesis by T.A. Crowson titled *When Elephants Clash,* in which the author, predating Anderson and not using any primary sources, offers the following:

> Then came Smuts, a purely political appointment. Although he had seen some action in the Boer War as a commando,

> he was completely out of his element when commanding large formations. Even his mentor, Louis Botha, realized he was no soldier and eventually recalled him. Malleson, with his genius for cutting through the British red tape, proved to be adept at rebuilding the army. Although the reasons for his removal remain obscure, one can infer that, again, political necessity demanded a South African general be placed in charge of the force. Although ostensibly another political appointee, unlike previous commanders. Van Deventer had experience in the region and understood the importance of grabbing the German by the collar and never letting go. However, seven successive British commanders could hardly hope to match the experience of one German commander (Crowson, 2003:95).

The instructive part is that a master's student, with little regard for the primary sources and relying heavily on Armstrong and Meinertzhagen, has come to the same conclusion as some heavyweight British historians.

Jon Nesselhuf presents a convincing argument that von Lettow-Vorbeck was a product of the well-established German way of warfare. The military doctrine he applied was conventional *Bewegungskrieg* and far removed from guerrilla war (Nesselhuf, 2012). He aligned his force to comply with the latest theories of the German General Staff. He fought an aggressive war of manoeuvre until he was nearly annihilated at the Battle of Mahiwa in late 1917. It was only then that he adopted a 'guerrilla'-type war. This type of analysis departs from the hero-worship von Lettow-Vorbeck has received from most other historians. The uncritical assessment of von Lettow-Vorbeck's generalship has an equal and opposite strong following regarding Smuts.

Conclusion

As evidenced in this overview, the historiography reflects the neglect that World War I in Africa has suffered compared to the never-ending torrent of history published on the Western Front. Africa's World War I was far from insignificant

for those who participated and suffered hugely. The war devastated the local population and the countryside wherever the protagonists chose to fight. These events were not inconsequential for South Africa - shaping politics, especially Afrikaner nationalism, for decades afterwards. Capturing GSWA and failing to secure Delagoa Bay despite all the efforts in GEA contributed to setting South Africa on a political trajectory from which she was only to emerge decades later in 1994. The military career of Smuts, who played a central role in a forgotten war, has received scant coverage. His role as a general has been ignored and overlooked despite his fundamental part in the GSWA and GEA campaigns. The little published on this period of his life deals with his time as a member of the Imperial War Cabinet and his role in the peace process afterwards. The attention he has received as a general is often adverse, based on flawed research, and amounting to synography in many cases.

Emergent 'new military history' has thrown light on the enormity of the calamity that befell Africa in World War I. Africa's contribution to the overall human cost of the war has emerged from being considered a mere sideshow. Von Lettow-Vorbeck's military competence and cynical but ultimately futile approach to devastating the African countryside has come in for overdue revision. Black participation in the conflict was central to the war in Africa. Black people undertook a significant portion of the fighting and the logistical support on both sides, fighting a surrogate war for their European masters. Undoubtedly, there has been a slight but perceptible shift in emphasis on Africa and its role in World War I.

Smuts's generalship and operational conduct during World War I have not attracted the same levels of revision. As a result, the subject of Smuts occupies a problematic and contested space in the historiography. He is an anachronism to modern historians born to a period of Imperial history that has increasingly come under attack in modern times. He was written out of history by the Nationalist Government from 1948 to 1993, which was hell-bent on removing all links to the United Kingdom. Since 1994, the new Democratic South

Africa has ignored him as irrelevant. Even when receiving rare attention (much of it has been adverse), it is poorly researched, especially regarding his abilities as a general. As a result, the void in the historiography persists despite the wealth of archival sources available in South Africa and the United Kingdom.

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6. Illusions of Sovereignty with Postcolonial Governmentality

Jan Smuts, Trusteeship, and the League of Nations

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Introduction

Trusteeship has legitimised Imperial power over foreign territories for over two hundred years. Over time, as the meaning of the concept has evolved, the accountability it imposes on trustees has been deferred. Prior to its establishment, in 1919, as a principle for Allied control of annexed territory, in the League of Nations' mandate system, the concept was adapted to various colonial contexts. From its original justification for direct colonial rule, trusteeship came to refer to mediated interim governance over a dependent state by a foreign power, which was expected to guide it to independence.

This latter conception presumes that the dependent subjects of trusteeship do not yet know their own best interests. It legitimates rule of the *capable* on behalf of the *incapable*, 'in a hierarchical relationship of *tutelage* based *explicitly* on a condition of *inequality*, to secure their welfare and protect them from exploitation until they can freely exercise the responsibilities of *mature* human beings' (Bain, 2003:27). As H. Duncan Hall explains, nations which are

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'mature, rational and governed... by high conceptions of law and justice undertake to assist less advanced peoples to climb the ladder of self-government' (Duncan Hall, 1946:199).

Histories of trusteeship usually begin with Burke's account. Burke criticised the concept of natural rights, insisting that explicit political arrangements are needed to secure freedoms of self-determination, which are lacking in nature. Burke's Whiggish critique of rationalistic natural rights gained publicity during the trial of the Colonial Governor Warren Hastings, with reference to Imperial rule over India. Trusteeship, he argued, delivers social rights for foreign subjects (Boisen, 2013). For Duncan Hall, 'it was the British House of Commons under Burke's leadership, rather than the Crown, that established the principles of the 'sacred trust' [...] now enshrined in the League of Nations Covenant' (Duncan Hall, 1946:201). But, with the growth of Britain's Empire, by the twentieth century, Burke's original justification of trusteeship for foreign social rights under direct Imperial rule had evolved into a distinct rationale for indirect rule, leading to decolonisation.

Responding to complex challenges of anti-colonial resistance the concept of trusteeship evolved in practice to take on a teleological justification, meaning that 'alien rule could be justified only if it encouraged backward people to the ranks of civilised life' (Bain, 2003:1). The normative goal of 'civilisation', as a criterion for independence, was relativised to a 'developmental' objective, as Imperialism realigned, in accordance with metropolitan governmentality, towards devolved relations of power. Political power was decentralised to local national representatives. Imperial duty was rowed back to a temporary caretaking role. This reconceptualisation of trusteeship shed responsibility to local powerbrokers and proxy state administrations. Such abdication of Imperial responsibility has gone unattended in the intellectual history of empire and decolonisation, resulting in scholarly misconceptions of the function of trusteeship, as a legitimating rationale for postcolonial international governance.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, we identify a significant distinction between Burke's conception of *direct trusteeship* in the eighteenth century and what we have termed a 'segregated' conception of trusteeship (Allsobrook & Boisen, 2017), espoused by the South African statesman Jan Smuts (1870-1950) in the early twentieth century. As a legitimating ideology for segregated, indirect rule, trusteeship was supposedly progressive at the time, for breaking with Eurocentric conceptions of cultural superiority. It was expected to protect vulnerable peoples, with different, but valuable and unique, cultural norms, from the harms of exploitation, and to integrate them gradually into modernity, under the guidance of a suitably powerful patron. With Allied victory after World War I, this rationale was used to justify international supervision of mandates over annexed territories. With reference to the segregation of trusteeship, we show how conditions in the racialised colonial periphery transformed the function of the concept - from a justification, urged by Burke, of direct responsibility for social rights in colonial rule - to one of indirect governance over culturally discrete nations, with distinct social rights, placed under the supervision of bought domestic power brokers.

Second, we challenge the contradiction asserted by some scholars (for example, Morefield, 2014:1; Mazower, 2009), between European support for a world system ordered by a universal ethic of sovereign equality, on the one hand, and continuation of an international hierarchy based on race, class, and Imperial status, on the other, which Smuts defended. In Smuts, Shula Marks sees a 'major contradiction between his identity as a white South African man and his self-perception as a liberal citizen of the world' (Marks, 2001:212). While Morefield (2014), Marks (2001), and Anker (2001) try to explain away this contradiction, we think they overstate the inconsistency. The concept of trusteeship, which Smuts advanced, aligned cost-and-force-saving decolonisation with colonies' demands for political independence. While postcolonial critics frequently target the universalistic rationalism of liberal norms and values, we find

that Smuts's liberal conception of trusteeship accommodates a segregated, cultural relativist view of national self-determination. Insistence on cultural particularism – the distinct 'personalities' of nations - informed and justified liberal segregationist ideology in South Africa (Dubow, 1990). This ideological interpretation of South African liberalism was born of liberals' criticisms of Eurocentric assimilationist ideals of 'salvation' and 'civilisation' (which did not suit an industrialising economy, such as that of South Africa, in need of basic labour).

Smuts's pluralist, cultural relativist conception of trusteeship served South Africa's later justification for apartheid, which envisaged a Commonwealth of 'Bantustan' homelands, each practicing discrete ethnic customs, under the oversight of a more civilised white South Africa. This pluralist, cultural essentialist interpretation of trusteeship, influenced by liberal segregationists' enlightened criticisms of direct rule and forced assimilation, supported a broader post-Imperial impetus towards the decolonisation of indebted, self-governing ethnic dependencies, whose relations with Western democracies were to be maintained under conditions of tutelage. The mandate system was the first institutionalised and internationalised step in this direction.

To say something of our limitations: our genealogy of trusteeship does not trace any consistent lineage in its adaptive evolution; rather, we elaborate on the significance for empire and postcolonial governmentality of an important and neglected distinction between two different conceptions of trusteeship. We do not trace influence of Burke's conception of trusteeship on the mandate system or compare League of Nations' mandates with United Nations' Trusts, insofar as Smuts influenced their designs. We acknowledge historical lines of conceptual pedigree in trusteeship, which we cannot trace, including John Stuart Mill's custodial notions of authority, which influenced nineteenth century British

public moralists, and British Idealists (see Boisen, 2013).[1] Smuts learned the term from Cecil John Rhodes, and from his experience as an administrator in the Transvaal (Smuts, 1942:7).[2] Being part of a 'world of ideas', such modifications to a concept may not be consciously recognised or formulated at the time (Boucher, 2016). Given the scope of our study, we simply distinguish the conception of trusteeship, which Smuts presented at Versailles, from Burke's use of the term, to explain a significant change in its Imperial function. By the time South Africa was unified in 1910, it was apparent that Smuts's notion of trusteeship could accommodate decolonisation as vehicle for more efficient, less cumbersome, Imperial consolidation. Smuts's sobriquet of 'Empire's Handyman' (Morefield, 2014), so named by his contemporaries, proved remarkably fitting.

Rights and Responsibilities of Rule in Burke's Trusteeship

Burke's notion of trusteeship was predicated - at the outset - on a critique of rationalist idealism. An emerging culture of rights shaped the ideas of moral duties that Europeans, as they saw it, owed to foreign subjects. The interpretation of rights as claims developed by historically developed communities, not inhering in nature, but emerging by convention, paved the way for the transformation of the language of *natural rights*

1 Another divergent concept of trusteeship is the remodelled Imperial one associated with Lugard, which is then taken up by the colonial office to justify a holding on to settler and non-settler states in Africa, for instance in Kenya with a view to giving them independence later. We are grateful to Saul Dubow for this point in commenting on our chapter..

2 In the Transvaal in the late nineteenth century, where black people were prohibited from buying land, they registered it in the name of a white person, usually a missionary, or a public official, who would hold it in 'trust' for the real buyer. The system started informally but was recognised by Britain in 1880 (Bergh & Feinberg, 2004:171) and again after the Second Anglo Boer War, who determined that the purchaser owned land held in trusteeship. Later on, the Native Affairs Department was given the function of official trustee for black land (187).

to that of *social rights*. It is in this transitional setting that we must understand Burke's conceptualisation of trusteeship, which is evident in the later British Idealists' constructivist justifications for Imperialism, which recognises a system of social rights to be necessary for full self-realisation in the moral community (Boisen, 2013; Hall, 2011).

Burke conceived of trusteeship, on the one hand, as a criticism of the abuse of empire, and, on the other hand, as an assertion of Britain's legitimate political rule in India. He best summed up his conception of trusteeship in his famous speech of 1783 on Fox's East Indian Bill:

> All political power which is set over men, and that all privilege claimed or exercised in exclusion of them, being wholly artificial, and for so much a derogation from the natural equality of mankind at large, ought to be some way or other exercised ultimately for their benefit. If this is true with regard to every species of political dominion and every description of commercial privilege, none of which can be original, self-derived rights, or grants for the mere private benefit of the holders, then such rights, or privileges [...] are all in the strictest sense a *trust*: and it is of the very essence of every trust to be rendered accountable [...] (Burke, 1881 'Speech on Fox's East India Bill, *WS*, II:439).

For Burke, legitimacy requires a ruler to secure civil rights for the ruled (Whelan, 1996:23-25). Social rights enjoyed by Indians depended on their subjugation, the legitimacy of which, in turn, depended on rulers' being accountable for the security of their rights. Burke's concept of trusteeship therefore implied rights for subject races of the British Empire (Conniff, 1993:298):

> Everybody is satisfied, that a conservation and secure enjoyment of our natural rights is the great and ultimate purpose of civil society [...]. Now, to aim at the establishment of any form of government by sacrificing what is the substance of it; to take away, or at least to suspend, the rights of nature, in order to an approved

> system for the protection of them [. . .] is a procedure as preposterous and absurd in argument as it is oppressive and cruel in its effect (Burke, 'Tracts on the Property Laws,' *WS*, VI:29-30).

In Burke's view, the task of deducing practical political policies from abstract 'natural' principles is a precarious affair. 'Government is not made in virtue of natural rights', he writes. 'Their abstract perfection' is in fact 'their practical defect'. (Burke, 'Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)', *WS*, III:310). While abstractly speaking such principles might be good, they are nowhere to be found (Burke, 'Speech on Moving Conciliation with America (1775)', *WS*, II:120). 'Pretended rights', he famously stated in *Reflections*, 'are all extremes: and in proportion as they are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically false' (Burke, 'Reflections', *WS*, III:313). Rejecting natural rights as metaphysical nonsense, Burke carved out a unique conception of *social rights,* in so far as their justification depended (a) on established custom, (b) on the contribution made to the common good and (c) on the civility of the community in which they emerged. Justification of social rights under trusteeship imposes a duty on the trustee to provide adequate security for the enjoyment of these rights. As the concept of trusteeship evolved, with the civilising mission, so its teleological legitimation came to the fore, to secure distinct foreign social rights with separate development.

In the later stages of overt European Imperialism, trusteeship was widely prescribed as a normative framework for dealing with non-European races. It was institutionalised at the Berlin Conference, called to regulate European colonisation and trade in Africa. The idea of trusteeship that was charted at Berlin between 1884 and 1885 established the principle, later formulated by Lord Lugard, that, 'Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane; that the benefit can be made reciprocal, and that it is the aim and desire of civilised administration to fulfil this dual mandate' (Lugard, 1965:617).

Like Burke's, this understanding of trusteeship insisted on obligations of right rule. But it also incorporated Victorian ideas about Britain's moral duty to promote prosperity and welfare to the furthest corners of empire. Lugard saw Britain as a trustee not only for the welfare and development of native races, but for civilisation itself. On the cover of *The Dual Mandate* was printed an epigraph from Joseph Chamberlain 'We develop new territory as Trustees for Civilization, for the commerce of the world'. Lugard believed the object of trusteeship was economic development for the mutual benefit of empire and its colonial subjects. In this, he discarded the more radical and constrained proposals of E.D. Morel, who saw trusteeship as guaranteeing a set of positive property rights for indigenous peoples and respect for the integrity of their cultures (Grant & Trivedi, 2006:34-5).

Segregated Trusteeship in South Africa

We have demonstrated elsewhere how trusteeship ideology was adapted in South Africa to justify the assignment of separate national identities to ethnic groups who were thought to hold essentially discrete customs (see Alsobrook & Boisen, 2017). Trusteeship justified outsourcing of the economic, political, and social costs of the reproduction of low-skilled labour to pseudo-independent homelands (Legassick, 1974; Smuts, 1942). This peripheral adaptation of the concept subverted the burden of responsibility, which, in Burke's account, rulers owed to their subjects, by devolving this duty to homeland administrations. The chief benefit of trusteeship ideology over ideologies of natural law, for Imperial legitimation, is that the practice of trusteeship is supposed to secure already existing customary practices and rights and to adapt them to Imperial interests. Natural law (in most of its early modern formulations), by contrast, presumes a preconceived set of rational principles. As it grew influential in South Africa, as a legitimating ideology for segregated rule, so the historicist conception of social rights which we find in Burke's idea of trusteeship, was essentialised by cultural pluralists. Anxious to preserve their cultural identity in Africa,

threatened by encroaching 'barbarians', white South Africans cured trusteeship ideology with a peculiar white supremacist understanding of plural cultural relativism. Customary distinctions were fixed with metaphysical racial identity in South African politics (Posel, 2001).

The concept of trusteeship evolved, in the context of African colonialism, to account more readily for customary distinctions with regard to social rights (as opposed to universal natural rights). Distinguishing different social rights for different nations, liberal pluralist settler colonists saw it in their duty as trustees to attend to the separate development of black Africans' distinctive customary practices. This thinking significantly influenced the conception of trusteeship which Smuts advanced at the Paris Peace Conference after World War I.

Smuts's Segregationist Conception of Trusteeship

In the wake of catastrophic maladministration exposed under King Leopold, the Congo Reform leader, E.D. Morel, was influential in articulating an Imperialist agenda that bound together with the concept of trusteeship the twin ideas of the Berlin Act: Native Welfare and Free Trade. By contrast with the Congo, prior to World War I South Africa's restructuring and unification proved a relatively successful model of trusteeship, by undergoing transition to self-governance in less than ten years, to gain Dominion status within the British Commonwealth. Furthermore, South Africa adapted the ideology of trusteeship to devise a system of segregated African ethnic national homelands, to be used as 'reservoirs of labour', under the guidance of the more advanced, white civilisation (Rich, 1984:4). These three strands of influence factored into Smuts's ideas for the mandate system.

Carving a key figure in international affairs between the two world wars, and advocating for effective authority in trusteeship over annexed territories, Jan Smuts was one of the most familiar colonial statesmen to British people born around the turn of the century. The public speeches of the Boer

General supported the supremacy of Britain's liberal Empire over a Commonwealth of diverse free nations. Lord Harlech, the High Commissioner of Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland, who pressured the British to accept the mandate system (Pedersen, 2015:54), proclaimed, 'when his exploits as a soldier and a politician had been forgotten, he was a South African who would live in human history as a prophet [...]' (Smuts, 1942:19). George Orwell remarked that 'few modern statesmen were more respected in Britain' after World War II (Schwarz, 2011:286.) However, Smuts represents an awkward counterpoint in London's Parliament Square to his liberal compatriot Nelson Mandela. Although Smuts's statue was erected in 1956, Schwarz observes, 'it is revealing that someone so familiar could so quickly disappear from view... at the very moment Empire collapsed' (Schwarz, 2011:226).

Smuts helped the Imperial War Cabinet to establish the British Air Force and to calm the Irish Crisis. He helped guide East European nations, Egypt, and Israel to independence. He acted as a key negotiator in peace settlements after the Second Anglo Boer War and after both World Wars. A key ally of Woodrow Wilson and mediator between the USA and the British during the Peace Conference, Smuts played a leading role in designing the frameworks for the League of Nations; for mandates over effectively annexed colonies (Marks, 2001:203); for the Covenant of the League of Nations; and, later, for the preamble to the United Nations (UN) Charter (Lake & Reynolds, 2008:344). He was asked by the British government to produce a blueprint for the League, later published as the popular and influential *A Practical Suggestion* (Lake & Reynolds, 2008:298).

A fan of Cecil John Rhodes, before his Transvaal raid, and of the qualified Cape liberal franchise of 'equal rights for all civilized men', based on education and property (Marks, 2001:213), Smuts picked up the idea of trusteeship from liberal segregationists' plans to protect black people from white people. As Hobhouse writes in *Liberalism*, '[a] specious extension of the white man's rights to the black may be best way of ruining the black' (Hobhouse, 1919:43). Smuts found

his position as both a Nationalist and a liberal Imperialist since the Second Anglo Boer War accommodated in trusteeship, which sought to assist dependent nations towards self-determination. He supported an independent Jewish national home in Palestine, but less developed Arabs, he argued, in 1917, were owed the guidance of trusteeship (Garson, 2007:169). Although liberalism is commonly associated with the universalism of human rights, Smuts claimed, where 'we have a more advanced and a less advanced race living side by side [...] the beautiful word 'trusteeship' has been found to describe the situation' (Smuts, 1942:8).

Smuts shows up the liberal Imperialist influence of segregation on trusteeship in post-war decolonisation. 'All too frequently,' Morefield points out, 'these imperialist assumptions remain unstated' (Morefield, 2014:34). In 1895, in Kimberley, Smuts declares, 'our white supremacy in South Africa brings grave responsibilities' since, as 'guardians of their own safety and development', the 'white race' must be 'trustees for the coloured races' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966:95). Whereas Hyam claims trusteeship, 'in the early years of the century,' especially in South Africa, 'was in constant counterpoint with the parallel policies of white self-government' (Hyam, 2009:266), we find that Afrikaners' struggle for the self-government complemented the cultural pluralism by which they justified trusteeship of the segregated kind. The struggle of the former Boer republics for self-government was Smuts's first point of reference. Afrikaner frontiersmen migrating northward were escaping British Anglicisation. Prospecting *Uitlanders* arriving for diamonds and gold were not well-received by conservative, religious, rural Afrikaners, soon to be devastated by war and affronted by Milner's Anglicisation policies (Du Toit, 1970:534). Afrikaners appreciated the offence for Africans of missionaries' and administrators' 'universal' cultural impositions.

Smuts's ideas for a global commonwealth avoided the negation of local custom under the subsuming categories of universal constitutional law. In this he shared common ground with British Idealists' ideas of trusteeship, predicated

on the expansion of a sustainable moral community (see Boisen, 2013).[3] He understood the Commonwealth to reconcile discrete customs within a mutually enabling community. Smuts's liberal relativist account of segregation (*'parallelism')* was expected to enhance the respective strengths of discrete cultural identities by encouraging self-determined national individuation. The view appealed to white South Africans, who were tired of offensive Imperialist jingoism after the Boer Wars, and who despaired at naïve Victorian ideas of universal assimilation, urging, instead, for practical common-sense solutions to considerable cultural differences (Fletcher, 1996:124).

As Smuts stated, 'Everybody in South Africa is agreed that European and African should live apart, and preserve their respective cultures' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966:345). Smuts articulated a pluralist interpretation of liberalism, developed in contradistinction to the assimilationist integration imposed by interfering Cape Liberals, missionaries, and administrators, who had failed to respect customary distinctions (by teaching Boers in English and discriminating against Xhosa initiation and marriage rites, for example) (Higgs, 1997:54). Smuts argued against the devastating effect of Cape colonials' imposition of European identity on 'native' Africans, that is, the 'amalgamationist' policies of former colonial Governors Smith and Grey, practised at the height of the humanitarian civilising mission in the mid nineteenth century (Dubow, 1989:30). He recommended a policy which would not force African institutions 'into an alien European mould', but which would, 'preserve her unity with her own past, conserve what is precious in her past, and build what future progress and civilization on specifically African foundation' (Smuts, 1930:78). This would, moreover, he claimed, be in good keeping with the traditions of the British Empire.

For Smuts, 'The development of peoples, not yet able to stand by themselves, can only mean the progress and

3 For Smuts's philosophical idealist foundations see Will Sweet chapter 11 of this volume.

civilization of these backward peoples in accordance with their *own* institutions, customs, and ideas, in so far as these are not incompatible with the ideals of civilization' (Smuts, 1930:258). Smuts did not reject the idea that there was a universal baseline of civilisation, in the same way that he did not reject the universal principle of natural equality between the races. Justice is colour-blind, he noted, 'and recognises no political differences on grounds of colour or race' (Smuts, 1930:263). However, he was keen to differentiate rights of natural equality from politically constituted rights, which depended on relative degrees of national self-determination. The former Cape Colonial practice of recognising equal political rights between the different races, he believed, was misguided; it 'arose at a time when the doctrine of native parallelism had not yet emerged, when native institutions were proscribed as barbarous, and the only place for the civilized native was therefore in the white man's system and the white man's institutions' (Smuts, 1930:263).

Smuts supported the Hilton Young Commission in recommending separate native institutions for local government purposes.[4] The Commission's recommendations stopped short, however, on the question of parliamentary institutions and political rights. Smuts sought to overcome this dearth of native administration, summing up his model of political segregation as follows:

> The new policy of segregation of political rights would seem to point to separate representation for the colours in the same parliament so that whites and native voters would vote in separate constitutions for separate representatives. There would still be equal political rights, and the Rhodes

4 The Hilton Young Report was released in 1929 and rejected the idea of self-government for Kenya on the Southern Rhodesia model. It was merely one in a line of official pronouncements that, as Ronald Hyam writes 'reflected the tussle for control between conflicting interests: officials as trustees, Parliament as watchdogs, the settlers and the Government of India'(2009:268-69).

> ideal in that sense would not be affected, but they would be exercised separately or communally (Smuts, 1930:78)

Smuts advanced the familiar idea of a duty of trusteeship to assist people beyond one's moral community. He also recognised the capacity of 'the natives' to formulate their own idea of 'the common good' (Smuts, 1930). He thought that traditional African political communities were not sufficiently robust to sustain a fully functioning system of equal rights, on the European model. Nor could they be. For Smuts, Africans' path to self-determination required the development of their own political systems and institutions, under the guidance of a more advanced power. Or at least this was his ideological riposte against the failures of assimilationist Cape Liberalism, in favour of separate development of the rights or customs of discrete nationalities under trusteeship.

Thus, essentialism about customary identity and practices informed the deferral of the obligations of trusteeship on which Burke's conception insisted. Smuts did not recognise the long history of trusteeship in Imperial history going back to Burke. At this point we may reassess the claim of Wm Roger Louis that '[t]he writings of Smuts and Wilson give no indication that either man was aware of this historical legacy' (1965:23). Wilson had in fact written a biographical sketch of Burke, and in the post-World War I reconstruction he found uncompromising devotion to liberty and equality akin to the revolutionary mindset Burke had criticised, advocating instead for a Burkean commitment to reform, preservation, and careful attention towards the customs and attitudes fostered by current institutions (Getachew, 2019:43). However, although Adom Getachew is correct in emphasising that the language of trusteeship 'was redeployed in service of expanding imperial power', it is misleading for her to further suggest that 'Smuts turned to Burke's model of trusteeship in service of [his] counterrevolutionary preservation of racial hierarchy' (Getachew, 2019:81).

Smuts's basic understanding of trusteeship was in fact influenced by Cape liberalism. He recalled, 'Cecil Rhodes used

repeatedly to say that the proper relation between whites and blacks in this country was the relation between guardian and ward. This is the basis of trusteeship' (Smuts, 1942:7). However, key motivations for South Africa's *segregated* adaptation of trusteeship arose in response to perceived failures of the paternalist Cape Liberalism associated with C.J. Rhodes. Largely accepted by the Cape African bourgeoisie, by educated elites, such as T. Soga, E. Makiwane and J.T. Jabavu, agrarian Cape Liberalism was undermined by the cultural essentialist racial ideology that came with mining capital. Unlike the assimilationist Cape, the relatively weak colony of Natal had established tribal 'reservations' to settle resilient Zulu chiefdoms. In the reconstruction process after the Second Anglo Boer War, experienced Natal administrators, such as T. Shepstone, H. Nicholls and C.T. Loram, pushed for the establishment of such segregated homelands (Allsobrook & Boisen, 2017).

The African Intelligentsia were co-opted, first, with promises of inter-racial co-operation and sovereign independence, offering rural landholdings and prospects for upward mobility, and second, by the Joint Councils and the Phelps-Stoke Commission into African education, drawing on Booker T. Washington's and J.E.K. Aggrey's ideals of African self-reliance (Rich, 1984:18-21, 26, 63). Out of concern for 'native welfare', in light of the hazardous effects of hasty urbanisation, humanitarians argued for 'evolution not revolution' and for retribalisation of Africans (Rich, 1984:5,31). As Garson explains, 'in the trusteeship relationship, it was accepted that African wards would slowly advance toward 'civilisation' ... in white employment, and education; but it was also assumed that trusteeship was a long-term task' (Garson, 2007:168).

Smuts's biographer W.K. Hancock intimates Smuts's cautious 'readiness to consider at some future time some limited improvements upon Native Parliamentary representation' (Hancock, 1968:490). Smuts had told the house in a speech of 17 April 1946 that while the idea of trusteeship might not provide all the solutions 'the idea and practice of

guardianship also [means] [....] that as those portions of the population who are under our guardianship develop, one must to a certain extent grant them political rights' (Smuts, cited in Hancock, 1968:490). Hermann Giliomee astutely notes that apartheid - established with the 1948 defeat of Smuts's United Party - 'was a modernised form of paternalism and trusteeship [...] and [...] liberal ideology' (Giliomee, 2003:373). It is crucial to see that the teleological pluralism which informed apartheid, distinguishing customary differences between nations, also deferred and devolved the direct duties on which Burke's idea of trusteeship insisted.

South African Unity in Segregated Trusteeship

The global influence of a segregated conception of trusteeship, shaped by mining interests on the Rand, away from the Cape, on the Highveld, after the Second Anglo Boer War, is generally underappreciated. Unlike the case of the Congo, whose colonial abuse perversely reinforced demand for trusteeship, successful examples of trusteeship were to be found first, with white representatives for black voters in liberal Cape colonial franchise, and then, with South African unification, in cultural pluralist Rand liberalism. Smuts saw the Dominions as role models for less developed Commonwealth nations, who aspired to advance along their own cultural paths (Lambert, 2000:199). He gained an understanding of trusteeship and Commonwealth through his experience after the Second Anglo Boer War, as a defeated general, invited to help plan South African unification in 1905 after Lord Milner left Governorship of what was then the Transvaal and Orange River Colony. He envisioned a cosmopolitan global community, to which each nation would bring unique cultural niche strengths, guided to self-determination by Greater Powers. It is too hasty to single out racial segregation as the model for Smuts's mandate system. Inspiration for both begins with South Africa's coming of age to responsible government.

'Espousing a policy of 'reconciliation' between Briton and Boer', Shula Marks claims that Smuts 'was *the* architect of

South African unification' (Marks, 2001:202). The first years, leading to Union in 1910, gave unparalleled power to Milner's 'Kindergarten', including Lionel Curtis, P.H. Kerr, and Patrick Duncan, to reconstruct South Africa. In this period, Legassick argues, 'a central area of concern for unification was the effort to address 'native policy' systematically, to secure 'a sufficiency of black labour at a suitably low price' (Legassick, 1995:43, 46). The South African Native Affairs Commission of 1903 to 1905 (SANAC), headed by Sir Geoffrey Lagden, outlined the premises of devolved segregation: using territorial racial separation to provide cheap black labour to mines and white cities and to effect a political system that excluded Africans from direct representation in government by awarding them local self-government elsewhere (Legassick, 1995:43). The rate of capital accumulation in gold mining depended on pre-capitalist relations of production in the reserve economy to keep costs of production down and a self-supporting peasantry compliant (Legassick, 1974:7). The economic structure of migrant labour, supported by poor homelands, survives to this day. Smuts adapted trusteeship in his 'native policy' of segregation:

> To promote the cause of civilisation without injustice to the African, without injury to what is typical and specific in the African, we shall render a great service to the cause of humanity. For there is much that is good in the African and which ought to be preserved and developed. The negro and the negroid Bantu form a distinct human type which the world would be poorer without (Smuts, 1930:74).

Such innovation was inspired by the progressive, humanitarian concerns, of anthropologists, social workers, and education reformers, that rapid assimilation of black labour in the cities was breaking down 'civilisation' and tribal customs on the mines, without imposing new ones, making settled urban workers difficult to manage (Legassick, 1995:47). Rural migrant labourers were thought to be more disciplined than urban Africans who had lost the influence of tribal customs (Dubow, 1989:24-5). The 1905 SANAC Report, prepared in the

Imperial tradition as a guidebook for future reference, argued, 'advance cannot be stayed, but must be conducted under civilised guidance', to support the advancement of indigenous peoples in ways that do not align too closely with European lifestyles (Legassick, 1995:48-9). The assimilationist ideals of Cape Liberals, promoting universal rights, were thus challenged, with South African unification, by the turn of the centre of gravity in political affairs to Rand Liberalism, influenced by social anthropologists' 'progressive' promotion of cultural pluralist social rights (Legassick, 1995:46. Dubow, 1989:34. Rich, 1984:2).

Liberal paternalists, such as Milner's protégé, Lionel Curtis, Eastern Cape parliamentary 'native representative' Richard Rose-Innes, and the Johannesburg Quaker accountant, Howard Pim, appealed to trusteeship to justify the case for keeping a self-governing white community in charge of an immature black population, living on separate land in the Protectorates and represented by 'native councils' (Legassick, 1995:55). In 1907, Curtis, in a letter to Patrick Duncan, wrote, 'we are moving from a policy of assimilation to separate development' (Legassick, 1995:43). After unification, the liberalism that developed in the 1920s was born in explicit opposition to universalist, assimilationist Cape Liberalism. The discourse of 'culture' replaced that of 'civilisation'. 'Difference' and 'pluralism' replaced 'individualism' and 'identity' (Legassick, 1995:34). South Africans essentialised race as a cultural construct, rather than a biological category (Posel, 2001).

As Minister of Mines, Smuts supported legislation for the colour bar in the workplace in 1911 and confinement of black people to a relatively small portion of separate territory in 1913, contributing to the establishment of the South African system of racial separation during the inter-war years (Marks, 2001:203). 'Defended by paternalist notions of trusteeship and segregated 'parallel institutions'', Marks adds, this policy united an alliance of English and Afrikaans supporters. Dubow explains the role 'South Africanist' ideology played in shoring up the racial order, to unite the white minority in its appeal

to a shared Anglo-Dutch heritage of cultural, legal, religious, scientific, and technological progress (Dubow, 1992)

The Concept of Trusteeship by which Smuts Defended Mandates

Smuts's 1929 Rhodes Memorial lecture explicitly aligns segregation with the 'sacred trust of civilization' he had set out in the Covenant of the League of Nations and in the mandate system, to guard 'the well-being and development of peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world' (Smuts, 1930:89). This precursor to postcolonial governmentality suited the pragmatic British turn to indirect rule and American neo-Imperial expansionism. Smuts appealed to Lugard's *Dual Mandate* to defend South Africa's policy of segregation as a legitimate form of trusteeship. He suggested that this policy provided Africans with 'native institutions' for self-government that were in line with their own traditions and customs (Garson, 2007:167). Segregated trusteeship in indirect rule (Rand liberalism) departed from the 'older policy' of coerced assimilation with direct rule (Cape liberalism), which sought to 'scrap native institutions' as 'barbarous.' Smuts credits Rhodes' Glen Grey system, extended throughout the Cape, for introducing 'indirect white rule' with native councils (Smuts, 1930:78-79). Whereas the policy of direct rule imposed the white man's culture, trusteeship encouraged a sense of pride and duty in national institutions (Smuts, 1930:84). In sympathy with Burke's counter-revolutionary critique of natural rights, Smuts argues,

> The principles of the French Revolution which had emancipated Europe were applied to Africa; liberty, equality and fraternity could turn bad Africans into good Europeans. The political system of the natives was ruthlessly destroyed in order to incorporate them as equals [...] we shall have to build her future progress and civilization on specifically African foundations [...] in line with the traditions of the British Empire [which] does not stand for assimilation of

> its peoples into a common type [...] but along their own (Smuts, 1930:78).

For Smuts, '[s]tates are not to be controlled by compulsion from above but by consent from below' (Smuts, 1918:33). After World War I, his plan for devolved administration presented to the Treasury helpful cutting of costs, adapting trusteeship to the altered balance of power.

Although Smuts is often called the 'father of the mandate system', the Pan-African activist and historian, Rayford Logan, claimed that its basic parts had been established long before Wilson read his pamphlet (Logan, 1928:426). By 1916, the idea of trusteeship had already been promoted in plans for international trusteeship proposed by E.D. Morel, J.A. Hobson, and P.H. Kerr, in *The Round Table*, and by Fabians in *New Statesman* (Winkler, 1951:156; Louis, 1963:415). But Smuts sold to Wilson a peculiar, segregated concept of trusteeship, which helped to reconcile colonial rivalries and disputes, by uniting, under international supervision, the principle of open-door trade with the practice of separate national development.

Smuts proposed his mandate plans to mediate between ill-advised conquest and ill-prepared colonial independence, arguing that a diversity of conditions in various territories meant that each should be considered individually. In a speech to both Houses of Parliament on 15 May 1917, Smuts advocated for the establishment of an organisation to uphold rights and maintain general peace, reminding his former British foe that the 'British Commonwealth of Nations does not stand for unity, standardization, or assimilation, or denationalization; but [...] for a fuller, a richer, and more various life among all the nations that compose it' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1966, vII:512).

Smuts put together his ideas in a hastily written 'short sketch' for a practicable workable scheme for a League of Nations, to 'occupy the great position which has been rendered vacant by the destruction of so many of the old European Empires and the passing away of the old European order' (Smuts, 1918:foreword). His draft plans for the covenant

played deliberately to American sentiments and proved highly influential on Wilson (Bain, 2003:91-3), who eventually endorsed the segregated account of trusteeship Smuts set out, to take on the duty to develop 'backward people' of the world,

> In accordance with their own institutions, customs, and ideas, in so far as these are not incompatible with the ideals of civilization. This was the plain meaning and intention of the article I can state with some authority, as I was in a measure responsible for this mandate principle and for its formulation in article 22 of the Covenant [... which ...] gives the native his own traditional institutions (Smuts 1930:89;91).

Wilson's chief delegate and advisor in negotiations towards the peace settlement, David Miller, notes that a third of Smuts's 21 proposals (sections 2 to 9) were devoted to the workings of the mandate system (Logan, 1928:35).

The internationally institutionalised precedence of mandated territories in the Berlin and Brussels Acts provided evidence for Smuts and G.L. Beer, Wilson's adviser, as a basis for mandated authority (Pedersen, 2015:18). Wilson and Lloyd George recognised that international control over dependent people must involve accountable responsibility for their interests, but there was not yet a workable system devised by which this could be determined in practice. Smuts and Beer appealed to the *Round Table* argument that international trusteeship of the Congo Free State had failed due to the lack of a directly accountable enforcing authority. On this basis, Smuts argued, mandated powers should be appointed to look after the foreign territories of fallen empires. Between the 'world state' ambitions of Wilson's utopian internationalism and *Round Table* federalists, Smuts drove home the argument that joint administration would be too chaotic and cumbersome, recommending the delegation of authority to trustees (Louis, 1965:20-34).

Wilson distrusted European leaders, who saw him as a dreamy idealist, and he suspected that France and Britain had

gathered for spoils. During his initial cautious interactions with them, Wilson became captivated by Smuts's *Practical Suggestion*, which Lloyd George presented to him. The articles Smuts set out on the constitution of the League, he continues, 'made a real advance toward the final solution', with explicitly assigned mandates, made publicly accountable to international supervision (Miller, 1928:36). 'Europe requires a liquidator or trustee of the bankrupt estate,' Smuts writes, 'and only a body like the League could adequately perform that gigantic task' (Smuts, 1918:27) The principles he thought vital to his 'modest scheme' include:

> Nationality, involving... political freedom and equality... autonomy, which is the principle of nationality extended to peoples not yet capable of complete statehood; the political principle of decentralisation, which will prevent the more powerful nationality from swallowing the weak autonomy... and finally an institution like the League of Nations, which will give stability to that decentralisation, and thereby guarantee the weak against the strong (Smuts, 1918:27-28).

Smuts persuaded British colleagues that with three major powers left in the world, it made sense for Britain to support the League to gain support from America. He explicitly modelled the League on the British Empire's Imperial Cabinet, minor Dominions, and liberal preference for open-door trade. An 'enduring Temple of future world government' that was 'built on the debris of an old dead world' was to be exercised in trust for a world government (Smuts, 1918:30-31). Churchill agreed, 'there were to be no annexations, but Mandates were to be granted to the Principal Powers which would give them the necessary excuse for control' (Haas, 1952:528).

Wilson's subsequent drafts borrowed many of Smuts's ideas and in due course German colonial territories were added to the plan, to be administered by small nations (MacMillan, 2003:89). He further adopted Smuts's idea of an executive council of Great Powers, representatives of minor states in rotation, the council veto by three or more negative votes, details on arbitration, penalties for breaking of covenants,

abolition of conscription, and, most directly, mandates. Wilson insisted on extending the plan to substitute mandates for annexation to avoid the impression that the war was fought for the purpose of Imperial territorial aggrandisement. While the French expressed support for trusteeship, they were reluctant to abandon direct rule in favour of mandated supervision (MacMillan, 2003:98; Haas, 1952:525). Minister of Colonies Henri Simon argued that annexation was more efficient and beneficial for the natives during discussions with the Supreme Council. Australia and New Zealand also advocated for annexation, testing the patience of Wilson and Lloyd George.

Nevertheless, Wilson stood firm (MacMillan, 2003:102-3; Haas, 1952:533). No one disagreed with the notion of trusteeship, per se; the debate turned on whether annexation or mandate was best suited to the purpose of trusteeship (MacMillan, 2003:99). Keeping in mind South Africa's ambition for South Africa, Smuts argued, for a stadial concession, that immediate independence was suitable for advanced East European Balkan territories but not for 'backward' nations inhabited by 'barbarians' (Smuts, 1918:15, 28, 36).

Thus, Smuts and Robert Cecil came up with the compromise, accepted in Article 22 of the Convention, of a system of trusteeship distinguished by 'A, B, and C' Mandates (MacMillan, 2003:103); although, it was Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary who first suggested the terms could differ, to allow the Dominions their colonies (Louis, 1963:421). The degree and duration of temporary supervision for territories was graded according to 'the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of its territory, its economic conditions, and other similar circumstances' (Thomson, 1947:344, Pedersen, 2015:29). Smuts's proposals for C mandates virtually allowed annexation, leading to Logan's criticism, that Africa was never expected to 'grow up', under permanent tutelage and lacking an open-door policy (Logan, 1928:431; Curry, 1961:981). Nonetheless, Wilson accepted the

adjustment, with Smuts's assistance, handling wary delegates (Curry, 1961:982).

Smuts's segregated, stadial, teleological conception of trusteeship enabled a compromise at Versailles on the sovereign status of annexed colonies. By the sanctioning authority of trusteeship, British policies of open-door trade and indirect rule over satellite economies were aligned with the USA objective of independence for mandated territories. It was Smuts's conception of segregated, temporary, indirect rule, as opposed to Burke's argument for direct Imperial dominion, which informed plans for the administration of mandates. Smuts's cultural essentialist idea of different national customs, with distinctive social rights, legitimated the Imperial turn to postcolonial governmentality, as assistance for segregated development.

For Americans, since Imperialism was no more, 'the League was to be the heir of the Empires'; for British sympathisers, it was not a substitute but another empire, with the same broad purposes and principles as the British Empire (Bain, 2003:92, 93, 97). To foreign subjects, especially in the C mandates, mandates did not seem much different from colonies.

Smuts's plan for trusteeship was the first to recognise new techniques for management of international relations made possible by the creation of the League, in a world, as Anghie reminds us, where 'sovereign states were the only actors recognised by international law' (Anghie, 2005:115). Smuts justified this hierarchical Imperial order with a conception of trusteeship that mandated the supervised dismantling of empires, to transform colonial territories into sovereign states and integrate them into the universal whole (Bain, 2003:21).

After World War II segregated trusteeship was established globally, involving the elimination of indirect rule, the summoning of new elites, and repurposing of the Imperial mission and colonial service for 'development' as a means of 'staying on' (Cain & Hopkins, 1987:17). Trusteeship

was adapted from a justification for empire to the provision of a more convenient alternative (Bain, 2003:21). As W.E. Rappard comments, on the World War I peace settlement in 1946, '[t]he terms of the compromise were obvious: President Wilson succeeded in preventing annexation; the conquerors in retaining their conquests' (Rappard, 1946:409). Ernst Haas concurs '[t]hat politics, and especially international politics, is the art of compromise is a cliché of ancient standing.... Acceptance of the Mandate System is a case in point' (Haas, 1952:521).

Liberal Segregation with Human Rights under Trusteeship

Critics highlight the inconsistency in Smuts's alignment of racial segregation with liberal human rights. However, after World War II, promotion of universal rights, representative democracy, liberal capitalism, and decolonisation aligned well with cultural and national segregation. His stadial theory of history placed Europeans at the top of a hierarchical system, with lesser political societies below. Marks, Morefield, Garson, and Anker explain how Smuts appealed to holism to reconcile liberalism and racism. We add that his belief in gradual moral and political progress reconciled liberalism with his racist worldview.

For many late nineteenth century writers, Kate Fletcher notes, 'there was no opposition between liberal humanism and colonial racism' (1996:126). 'Smuts's privileging of the concept of humanity, limited to the 'European races' in South Africa, she argues, provided a compelling justification for a political structure founded on liberal humanism, which encompassed inherent racism within it (Fletcher, 1996:126). We largely agree with her, but with some reservation towards her assumption that Smuts denied the humanity of black Africans, and that of Marks, that he reserved liberalism for white people. As Smuts's concept of trusteeship denotes, the concept of universal humanity does not entail equal identity. The supposed humanity of Western Christianity justified

colonialism for centuries, first, in rights to conquer and exploit foreign lands, and then in duties to assist and uplift those who had not reached full development or self-determination (Boisen, 2013). Late nineteenth century international law presumed specific norms of civilisation as the test of statehood (Sylvest, 2008:416), just as the Cape Liberal franchise had insisted on property and education as a qualification for the franchise.

The inconsistency critics identify between Smuts's endorsement of paternalistic segregation and liberal human rights reflects a common misunderstanding of human rights as natural rights, and of liberalism as the ideology of a certain order of universality. As we have demonstrated, Smuts saw human rights as social rights (a view he held in common with positivist international legal theorists, British Idealists, and constructivist social anthropologists). Moreover, his policies of racial segregation followed a common liberal pluralist critique of homogeny. 'Smuts emphasised an important, 'inner creative factor', Fletcher explains, which for him was, 'the real positive motive force of Evolution': that of 'Variation'' (Fletcher, 1996:117). Variation supports adaptation to different contexts and, so Smuts believed, 'ensured the fundamental inequality of holistic development between individuals that was necessary for the progress of the whole' (Fletcher, 1996:118). The evolutionary level of the higher-minded personality of individuals or legislative authority of the state depended on organisational capacity, 'to order, sublimate and regulate into a harmonious unity, but not to equalise, the disparate elements' (Fletcher, 1996:118).

Garson raises the valuable consideration that 'race' was used loosely in general discourse in Smuts's lifetime when he identified the English- and Afrikaans-speaking population as 'two white races' (Garson, 2017:157). 'Race' was associated with 'nation'. Race was also commonly accepted as a cultural category in South Africa. In keeping with Burke's critique of natural rights, trusteeship ideology in South Africa was not based on natural *biological* racial difference. Segregationists appealed to cultural social rights of national self-

determination. Giliomee insists that 'biological racism was a fringe phenomenon' in South Africa (Giliomee, 2003:386). However, cultural differences were essentialised, such that racial hierarchies were used to ratify and reinforce social and economic inequalities (Rich, 1984:5; Posel, 2001:94-6). The influential racial policy developer, Werner Eiselen, insisted that segregation pays sensible attention to the cultural basis of nationality: 'The duty of the native is not to become a black European, but to become a better native, with ideals and culture of his own' (Dubow, 1989:37). In *Africa and Some World Problems* Smuts agreed that black people should build up their own institutions in their own areas, so they were not turned into 'pseudo-Europeans' (Smuts, 1930:47, 74-76).

Influenced by Hoernle's influential paper, Nationalist academics like N.P. van Wyk Louw and several Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) theologians argued for segregation or 'parallelism,' based on an essentialist view of 'custom' promoted by emerging social anthropologists (Dubow, 1989:8; Giliomee, 2003:387). Smuts's 1929 Oxford lectures, supporting segregation, citing the distinctive character of African culture, influenced the Hailey Survey's review of African Imperial governance. Most of Prime Minister Hertzog's ideas for the 1936 Land Bills were based on liberal ideas concerning the homelands system, such that 'apartheid' was 'largely derived from existing segregation and trusteeship ideology' (Dubow, 1989:22). In the 1920s, Afrikaner apartheid ideologues increasingly emphasised 'culture', to allocate groups to Bantustans based on 'ethnicity.' P.J. Coetzee, the father of *volkekunde*, differentiated each 'ethnos' according to a culture's distinctive teleological calling (Dubow, 1994:359). The DRC viewed its role towards natives as paternalistic welfarism, a 'sacred trust' (Dubow, 1992:213), rejecting failed missionary attempts at 'detribalisation' and advocating for non-white welfare to develop pride in one's *volk*. Progressive, liberal trusteeship ideology was influenced by the cultural fetishism of the Great Trek, which mythologised Afrikaner self-determination.

In the 1944 parliamentary debate, D.F. Malan, later the first Prime Minister of South Africa, along with his political associate Paul Sauer, defended apartheid with reference to the 1930s DRC practice of 'self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating churches' (Giliomee, 2003:390). Giliomee explains that their stance was rooted in the Cape Afrikaner ideology of paternalism and British colonialism, emphasising indirect rule and trusteeship, rather than racial ideology. Malan advocated an independent white republic, practising apartheid and trusteeship, to ensure the safety of the white race and the development of the non-white race, each according to their own distinctive abilities (Giliomee, 2003:388). South African segregationists justified segregation with Malinowskian cultural relativism, British pluralism, and indirect rule, employing the language of cultural adaptation and trusteeship (Dubow, 1989:37).

The ideology of segregated trusteeship, on the basis of discrete customary differences, which arose in South Africa, was influenced by Imperial adaptation, responding to Africans leaders' insistence on recognition of their distinctive social rights and their right to self-determination. Gradualist elites like the newspaper editor J.T. Jabavu leveraged the language of legitimation to secure African social rights. They recognised that working within the framework of South African society, rather than opposing it, was crucial for future African welfare. We should not imagine that these leaders were deceived about their subordinate situation. But they appealed to British justice, to insist on the path to European 'adulthood'. They skilfully and subtly employed 'sly civility' (as described by Homi Bhabha), using colonial mimicry to work the system. In 1887, Jabavu stressed in his newspaper that allegiance to the Queen aided the weaker, subject race in the British Empire, since this secured freedom, law, and protection (De Kock, 1996:61, 107-114, 131).

Concluding remarks

The evolution of the concept of 'trusteeship' in South Africa was characterised by a significant shift from its original legitimation of direct rule and universal assimilation to a doctrine of segregated postcolonial governmentality. Not only did this adaptation depart from Burke's understanding of trusteeship, which emphasised direct accountability, but it also marked a divergence influenced by Smuts's perspective on the legitimacy of mandates.

Contrary to Burke's model of trusteeship, the segregated ideology that emerged in South Africa essentialised customary differences and promoted separate political institutions for groups with distinct customs. Segregation accompanied the delegation of responsibility for separate social rights to proxy national regimes, associating Imperial political obligations with a moral duty to protect the interests of foreign subjects. Eventually, the perpetuation of this segregated ideology catalysed the establishment of ethnic homelands ruled by compliant collaborators, transitioning trusteeship from a rationale for formal empire to a rationale for indirect rule. By tailoring different political institutions to the specific needs of distinct nations, trusteeship functioned to justify informal empire. The turn to international segregation allowed for ongoing supervision of decolonised nations, allowing for financial and commercial control without direct annexation, while eroding the accountability for subjugated citizens that Burke's trusteeship brought to Imperial rule.

Anghie suggests that the League of Nations' adoption of wardship and tutelage ideology was intended to replicate in non-European societies the specific developmental process of Europeans, to promote individualism in mandated territories as a means for efficient governance and fostering of social rights (Anghie, 2005). On the contrary, segregated trusteeship thrives on multicultural postcolonial governmentality. Anghie fails to recognise that the mandate system never intended the erasure of cultural pluralism. Inculcation of distinct social rights and diverse identities was the pluralist

liberal aim of segregated trusteeship, transforming the enlightened, rationalist, universalistic, and evangelical basis of the civilising mission into a financial development aid programme, by which puppet leaders of indebted, ethnically segregated postcolonial regimes would access funding for the infrastructural development and defence of dependent administrations.

Hopkins rightly acknowledges the distinction between Imperialism, rooted in loyalty to the empire, and nationalism, driven by aspirations of self-determination. Presuming that the hierarchical structure of the empire clashed with the decentralised, multicultural concept of the Commonwealth, however, he argues that the shift towards post-Imperial civic nationality jeopardised Imperial power. Hopkins further asserts that Smuts's vision thus required dismantling and replacing the structure of empire for the establishment of a new postcolonial order (Hopkins, 2008:230). By contrast, we contend that nationalism aligned well with the segregated conception of trusteeship that Smuts advocated, in line with Robertson and Gallagher's argument that: 'responsible government was far from … a separatist device' (Robertson & Gallagher, 1953:4). Hopkins' view exaggerates the distinction between Commonwealth and Empire, misunderstanding the beneficial interaction between these two systems, made possible by Smuts's segregated conception of trusteeship.

As Anghie explains, political sovereignty was transferred to independent states without economic autonomy. Our reading of Smuts's segregated conception of trusteeship shows how these two modes of dominion were bridged and extended to maintain cultural, financial, and economic hegemony. Decentralised sovereignty relieved empire of direct responsibilities for the social rights of dependent peoples, while acceding to demands of Nationalist resistance and international competition by buying in proxy ethnic leaders. In Mamdani's terms, the two systems of equal citizenship and independent sovereignty came to represent 'two parts of a single but bifurcated system' (Mamdani, 2010:56). Trusteeship bridged decolonisation and global governance.

Informal and formal empires became interchangeable, as Gallagher explains, with varying degrees of control.

In the mid twentieth century, Bain argues that 'the legitimacy of trusteeship collapsed in the face of rapid and widespread decolonization' (2003:68). He claims, '[h]olding people in a state of dependence, subject to the rule of an alien authority, constituted an offence to fundamental human rights and freedoms that could no longer be justified in post-colonial society' (Bain, 2003:68). The idea of proportionate equality, allowing power or privileges on the basis of merit, does not square with the principle of universal equality, he claims: '[t] he right of self-determination transformed trusteeship into a crime against humanity' (Bain, 2003:66). Yet postcolonial governmentality introduced by Smuts's segregated conception trusteeship is evident in outsourced development of former colonies by the aid of great powers, to meet the demands of advanced corporations and citizens of the developed world.

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7. Jan Smuts and his 'Sphinx' Problem[5]

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I.

To the question 'Was Smuts a racialist?' the response must be in the affirmative. The answer becomes more nuanced, however, if we ask what *sort* of racialist he was - working from the assumption that racism itself has a history and that not all racisms are identical. In this chapter, I shall make the case that Smuts's racialism was deeply grounded in his civilisational world view and his metaphysical philosophy - and also reflected in his persistent temporising. This leads me to conclude that Smuts was a profound racialist in a double sense: first, that he was committed to the preservation of Anglo-Afrikaner white supremacy and 'Western civilisation' and, second, that his philosophy of slow civilisational advance was bound up in a conception of humankind as a product of deep evolutionary time. Smuts's commitment to the advance of Western civilisation coupled with the right of white people to act as custodians of Africa (and Africans) remained consistent through his life.

For Smuts, the evolutionary, geological and anthropological framework through which he viewed humanity allowed the possibility of racial advance or regression over large undefined spans of time. It also encouraged Smuts to defer and dissemble when it came to dealing with the 'native question'. In his first public speech, in 1895, the 25-year-old lawyer argued that it was not possible to 'safely apply to the barbarous and semi-barbarous Native the

5 My thanks to Paul Betts, Richard Bourke and Richard Wilson for most useful comments.

advanced principles and practice of the foremost peoples of civilization.' But he had no ready solution to offer. The 'native question', he said, remained 'the great sphinx-problem of South Africa' (Smuts, 1895:95).[6] Smuts would use this sly phrase again. Delaying tactics and rhetorical feints were a constant through Smuts's career. Ultimately, this contributed to his political defeat in 1948, when Smuts found that he had no compelling answer to the populist appeal to white people of 'apartheid'. On race, Smuts himself was sphinx-like in his ambiguity.

Most biographical accounts of Smuts avoid the topic of race or parse the problem in such a way as to find a balance between his racial policies at home and his espousal of freedom abroad. Sometimes this is cast as 'hypocrisy' (cognitive dissonance might explain more). At other times the temptation is to avoid Smuts's complicity in racial segregation by excusing his ideas as 'of their time'. One of the few historians to have made Smuts's views on race the centre of discussion is Noel Garson, whose conclusions are judicious and meticulously presented in terms of an ethical balance sheet (Garson, 2007). Yet, Garson's criteria of what counts as racism are defined too narrowly and, in any case, much has changed since he wrote his article 20 years ago: in South Africa, political traditions of non-racism are now much weakened with expanded definitions of race ubiquitous in public discourse; beyond South Africa, Smuts has attracted the interest of global historians concerned with internationalism and decolonisation. For the historian Adom Getachew, writing about the post-World War I settlement and the League of Nations, Smuts features along with President Woodrow Wilson as the key promoter of a 'counterrevolutionary' project which, in the guise of advocating national self-determination and

6 Smuts's speech is described by Hancock and van der Poel as his `first appearance on a political platform' (p.80). It took place under the auspices of the De Beers Political and Debating Association and was delivered in response to a paper written by Olive Schreiner (read by her husband `Cron' Schreiner) which criticised Rhodes' `native policy'. Both papers were presented shortly before the Jameson Raid.

freedom, was in fact geared at defending worldwide white supremacy (Getachew, 2019:40, 42-3).

Getachew's formalistic account - her training is as a political theorist - has little to say about the political constraints under which he operated in South Africa. Her transnational focus does not illuminate much about his efforts to cement reconciliation between English- and Afrikaans-speakers in the post-Union era - then ubiquitously known as the 'race' problem. Nor does it take into account the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and, in particular, General Hertzog's growing insistence on passing his segregationist legislation from 1926. This involved a systematic effort at solving the problem of 'colour', a political challenge that Smuts fully recognised but routinely sought to avoid or delay.

Smuts was undoubtedly committed to racial segregation. Here, he positioned himself on the liberal-paternalistic side of the argument rather than with those who sought outright racial domination or *baasskap* (mastery). He eschewed the attempts of those who sought to mobilise racial antagonisms for immediate political gain. Instead, he sought to unite moderate English- and Afrikaans-speakers. This project had an internal and an external dimension. The former sought to bring white people under the banner of broad 'South Africanism'. The latter entailed South Africa's full participation in a Commonwealth comprising the white-dominated Dominions. Smuts defined this emerging bloc in 1917 as a 'system of nations' pursuing mutual interests as free and equal states in voluntary association. This repudiated another idea that was in vogue, namely, a British-centred federation or 'super-state' which was favoured by figures such as Milner. Smuts's approach to the Commonwealth was thus oriented to a colonial Nationalist rather than Imperialist outlook. In tandem, Smuts proposed a League of Nations in 1918 which expressed the view that small European nations merited national self-determination, an idea to which President Wilson became attached. In Africa, Smuts wished to apply these freedoms to fuel South African sub-Imperialism, working from the assumption that white South Africa itself

was a Europe-in-Africa. Thus, he advocated taking over the British High Commission territories or Protectorates (an objective baked into a Schedule of the Act of Union) as well as utilising the mandates provisions which he himself helped to draft on behalf of the League in order to incorporate former German South West Africa (Hyam & Henshaw, 2003: chap. 5). (This twin strategy is often lost by historians working either on the League or on British colonial policy).

Smuts played a key role in defining the new Commonwealth as well as the League of Nations mandates policy. Yet, he ultimately proved unsuccessful in utilising his device of 'C' class mandates – which included South West Africa and Tanganyika – in order to achieve his larger objective of creating a white-dominated federation of British colonial interests extending from South Africa through Rhodesia and Kenya towards Egypt. He was stymied in this quest by a combination of the League of Nations' Permanent Mandates' Commission; a British colonial office wary of ceding the Protectorates to South Africa; the refusal of white Rhodesians to join South Africa in a referendum held in 1922; and a growing Afrikaner Nationalist movement that saw greater South Africa - South West Africa aside - as a dangerous threat to ethnic Afrikaner dominion.

Smuts's efforts to promote white unity at home and a new Commonwealth abroad led him to articulate a distinctive brand of democratic ethno-nationalism focused on 'whiteness' (or 'broad South Africanism'). This was closely tied to his lifetime support of Western Christian civilisation (he was himself fond of the anachronistic term 'Christendom') powered by science and technology. He viewed black nationalism as a threat, especially if infused with Bolshevism, but mostly he conceived this danger in abstract terms rather than as an imminent threat. Instead of embracing hard or dogmatic forms of exclusion, Smuts appealed, in paternalistic terms, to a sense of common humanity which would allow black and white people to co-exist within a stratified social system based on tutelage or trusteeship.

In respect of race, Smuts was not an original thinker, yet he was, as in other of his intellectual activities, a compelling synthesiser. With rare exceptions, Smuts avoided the discourse of populist racism. On the occasion of his installation as Chancellor of the University of Cape Town in 1937, Smuts delivered a rousing oration on the need to respect the gospel of fact and to eschew ideological extremism in the form of Bolshevism and Nazism. He identified 'tolerance' as the essence of civilisation with respect for a common humanity. This led him to advocate a spirit of what he ventured to call 'racial indifference' (*Rand Daily Mail* (*RDM*), 3 March 1937). It was a clever formulation intended to de-emphasise racial antagonisms but stopping well short of colour 'blindness'.

Smuts's interests in evolutionism and spiritual unity culminated in his integrative theory of holism, a philosophy that stressed organic connections through cosmological time. This assumed the idea of gradual progress while also allowing for its opposite, retrogression. Although infinitely capacious, Smuts did not extend its meaning to conceive of South Africa as a multi-racial society - one can only wonder whether this was a conscious choice. Because Smuts thought in terms of aeons, his approach did not commit him to the zero-sum biological determinism of eugenics which calibrated human progress in shorter, generational spans and, in its more extreme versions, sought the immediate eradication of undesirable dysgenic traits.

Anthropology offered Smuts a way to navigate these alternatives. The culturalist version was conceived in relativist rather than absolute terms. This presumed that human differences were socially constructed rather than innate - though in Smuts's essentialist usage they were easily conflated. He subscribed to ideas of superiority and inferiority but elected to soften the edges wherever possible. Cultural relativism in the Smutsian sense was fully compatible with paternalism and protectionism. Its flexibility and permeability supported a gradualist version of segregationism that bore strong familial resemblances to British indirect rule and

trusteeship ideology. These were key elements of Smuts's philosophical and constitutional thinking.

Smuts was especially attracted to palaeontology, which directed his thinking to deep evolutionary or geological time. His interests thus focused on new discoveries by physical anthropologists such as Robert Broom and Raymond Dart. Their much celebrated and contested discoveries of fossilised hominin remains from the 1920s onwards revealed Africa's importance in human evolution and, though the work of Raymond Dart and others, encouraged typological approaches that laid emphasis on the emergence of different *kinds* of humans rather than a common *humankind* (Dubow, 2007:9). Smuts preferred environmental explanations to account for human variation. This led him to the view that climate was a key determinant or conditioner of difference in the natural as well as the human world.

In a complex and speculative 1932 essay on Pleistocene rainfall patterns which integrated new palaeontological discoveries in East Africa conducted by Louis Leakey with more established European and southern African evidence, Smuts lent his authority to the hypothesis that Africa was the original continent of *Homo sapiens.* If European and African racial types were not so different a mere 15,000 years ago, how had 'the immense difference between the European and Bushman of to-day' come about? 'We see in the one the leading race of the world, while the other, though still living, has become a mere human fossil, verging to extinction. We see the one crowned with all the intellectual and spiritual glory of the race, while the other still occupies the lowest scale in human existence. If race has not made the difference, what has?' To this rhetorical question he added a get-out clause: 'Of course the question is far too speculative, and our ignorance of all the essential conditions far too profound, to make any attempt at an answer worthwhile.' (Smuts, 1932:129).

Unlike eugenists, whose racial alarmism led them to demand rigorous enforceable measures to curb intermixture, Smuts was disposed to allow nature to take its course or, in

terms that he was fond of using in the political sphere, to 'let things develop'. Jan Hofmeyr, Smuts's loyal deputy, wrote critically to Sarah Gertrude Millin about Smuts's dilatory tendency 'to put off doing things which are a little unpleasant'. Hofmeyr was referring here to the likelihood that Smuts would procrastinate and avoid taking decisive action to defend African franchise rights. This was indeed borne out when, after ten years of political arm-twisting, Hertzog's original 1926 suite of segregationist legislation finally made its way through parliament. In 1936 Smuts joined with Hertzog in passing the government's landmark segregation legislation (Paton, 1964:221; Dubow, 1989: chaps 5&6).

This was a slow capitulation. At the 1929 'black peril' election - the first time that colour featured centrally in white politics - Hertzog represented Smuts's greater South Africa pretensions in virulently racist terms, castigating Smuts as 'the man who puts himself forward as the apostle of a black Kaffir state' stretching from the Cape to the Sudan. On the platteland, Smuts was wrongly characterised as wishing to grant the vote to black people (Hancock, 1968:218; Neame, 1930:270).

In the lead-up to the election campaign, Smuts had sought to calm the growing racial hysteria by arguing that it had always been his policy to 'keep the native question out of party politics' (*RDM*, 30 January 1929; 17 January 1929). This tactic failed and Smuts duly lost the election, outmanoeuvred and unable or unwilling to mount a principled defence of the non-racial franchise. Hertzog had no compunction about indulging in racial threats, whereas Smuts abjured crude racial politics. He was disinclined to deprive black people of their *existing* rights if the assurances he gave to a meeting of black voters in the rural district of Herschel in April 1929 are to be believed (*RDM*, 11 April 1929). Yet, he was simultaneously of the view that black people should not have a role in national politics. He believed that their political interests should, instead, be represented indirectly by means of decentralised advisory bodies.

II.

There is very little in the Smuts archive - either written or spoken - to show that he deliberately used racist ideas for political purposes. Smuts frequently counterposed terms like civilised and barbarian (or barbarous). The latter word was pejorative but it did not necessarily connote a state of permanent backwardness or retrogression in classical usage, though by the time Smuts was using it they had undoubtedly acquired offensive meanings. Towards the end of his career, in 1947, Smuts wrote privately and plaintively to Daphne Moore, one of his many women confidantes and interlocutors, reflecting on the searing criticisms levelled against him at the inaugural session of the United Nations:

> I continue to swim in my sea of troubles, and may yet drown in it. On one side I am a human and a humanist, and the author of the preamble to the Charter. On the other I am a South African European, proud of our heritage and proud of the clean European society we have built up in South Africa, and which I am determined not to see lost in the black pool of Africa (Smuts, 1947).

Leaving aside the plangent, self-pitying, tone of this passage, Smuts reveals an awareness of the fundamental contradictions in which he found himself, a point upon which several sympathetic women confidantes gently upbraided him. He did not brush his personal critics aside so much as try to persuade them that his hand was constrained by political realities. Similar dynamics can be seen in his relationship with the Cambridge philosopher, H.J. Wolstenholme, member of a well-known radical intellectual family which included the suffragist, Elizabeth Wolstenholme. Until his death in 1917, the reclusive Wolstenholme regularly supplied Smuts with reading material and gentle intellectual guidance.

Scholars such as Shula Marks and Bill Schwarz have shown that Smuts's silences on race, as well as on whiteness and masculinity, are just as telling as his deliberate or conscious statements (Marks, 2001:119-223; Schwarz,

2011:287-293). Like the American poet Walt Whitman (about whom Smuts wrote a remarkable study of the evolution of 'personality' in 1895 while completing his Cambridge law degree) Smuts was simultaneously anti-slavery and critical of abolitionists and humanitarians. Both men were pro-white democrats and pro-Unionists whose respective views of their nations were profoundly shaped by the experience of civil war. Whitman was minded to avoid the problem of race or, as Sarah Churchwell puts it, to hope that black people would somehow 'go away' (Churchwell, 2023; Engels, 2016). Smuts adopted a similar approach. As Liz Stanley remarks in her study of 400 letters written by Smuts to May Elliot Hobbs, part of the circle of radical women friends (including the Clarks and Gilletts) with whom Smuts corresponded so assiduously, there is a resounding 'silence' about black people in his description of daily life: 'fields plough themselves, cars drive themselves, clothes wash themselves, food cooks itself.' This form of silencing or dampening is more characteristic of Smuts's approach to race than Shula Marks's analysis of 'the almost visceral racial fears' that punctuate his writings and which are interposed somewhere between his conscious and subconscious self (Stanley, 2017; Marks, 2001:215, 206).

Rather a lot depends on our interpretation of the 'almost' in Marks's characterisation of Smuts's racial fears and angst. They were undoubtedly present and apt to break through at times in his correspondence and public addresses - though sometimes, one suspects for performative purposes. This leads us to ask whether Smuts feared black predominance in the immediate or distant future. My own view is that it was the latter. Smuts's intellectual confidence or arrogance encouraged his sense that he could disabuse his antagonists of their wrong-headed views. It also encouraged his continuous temporising which included a preference to think about the 'native problem' in abstract terms.

In 1906, as the prospect of closer union and segregation was beginning to clarify, Smuts wrote to the Cape liberal politician John X. Merriman:

> I sympathise profoundly with the Native races of South Africa whose land it was long before we came here to force a policy of dispossession on them. And it ought to be the policy of all parties to do justice to the Natives and to take all wise and prudent measures for their civilization and improvement. But I don't believe in politics for them. ... I would therefore not give them the franchise, which in any case would not affect more than a negligible number of them at present. When I consider the political future of the Natives in South Africa I must say that I look into shadows and darkness; and then I feel inclined to shift the intolerable burden of solving that sphinx problem to the ampler shoulders and stronger brains of the future (Smuts, 1906:242).[7]

As David Katz remarks, this 'non-policy' was 'short-sighted' even by the standards of the day, but Smuts tried to hold to this line throughout his political life (Katz, 2022:28). Habitual vacillation finally caught up with him in 1948.

Smuts's disinclination to concede political agency to black people or to confer with black leaders on a basis of equality meant that he avoided, despite Lloyd George's urging, an opportunity to meet with Sol Plaatje and other ANC leaders in London or Paris in 1919 in order to discuss what the British Prime Minister thought of as their 'legitimate grievances' (Willan, 2018:351-2, 361-4). Smuts batted the suggestion

7 On his view of the non-racial franchise, see also Smuts to J.A. Hobson 13 July 1908 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers Vol. II*, pp.440-43, where he argues `that the only sound policy at this stage is to avoid any attempt at a comprehensive solution of the various questions surrounding the political status and rights of the Natives.' And, further: `Public opinion in the majority of the South African States is against a Native franchise in any shape or form, and while it cannot be denied that on this delicate subject responsible public men are probably in advance of the rather crude attitude of the people at large and would be prepared to consider the subject on its merits, still the fear of the people will be with them and they will probably shrink from any far-reaching innovation.'

aside on the grounds that the ANC was unrepresentative, and he expressed irritation at their leaders' decision to vent protest outside South Africa. Smuts treated ANC president A.B. Xuma in much the same way in 1943 when Xuma sent him a copy of *Africans' Claims* with a request for an interview. This was rebuffed by a note asserting that the document was 'propagandist'. No useful purpose would be served by any meeting. In 1946, Xuma was in New York as the guest of Paul Robeson and the anti-colonial Council on African Affairs. Xuma and Smuts were both there for the first session of the United Nations. They met, apparently by accident, at a press function. Smuts was said to have been taken aback. Xuma had the last word, explaining his presence in New York by saying: 'I have had to fly 10,000 miles to meet my prime minister. He talks about us but won't talk to us.' (Dubow, 2008:62, 67. Also see Ngqulunga in this volume)

Smuts's reluctance to meet directly with black leaders contrasts with his close encounters with Gandhi, which were forged in the first decade of the century as the Indian protest movement in the Transvaal gathered momentum. Leaving aside the complex negotiations that ensued after their first meeting in 1908, there was also a personal and philosophical dimension to the encounter: Gandhi used the interaction to hone his ideas about Satyagraha and home rule; Smuts, also committed to higher theories of ethics and philosophy, embarked on a process of statecraft which, a decade later, would evolve into the idea of white ascendancy and sovereignty within the context of Commonwealth. Gandhi and Smuts were both critics of Imperialism - albeit not of empire as such - who came to appreciate the constraints imposed by their respective political positions. Theirs was a distant friendship underpinned by mutual regard. Gandhi and Smuts can indeed be seen as coeval intellects, both philosopher statesmen (and lawyers) who gained renown by translating their specific South African experiences into ideas of freedom - to which international audiences proved receptive.

In 1933 Smuts sent a private telegram to Gandhi, appealing to him in the name of 'old friendships sake' and

in recognition of the causes he had successfully campaigned on (like 'untouchability') to abandon his planned fast: 'Endangering your life might lead to dreadful calamity and irreparable setback at most critical moment.' In 1939 the Indian philosopher and statesman Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan invited Smuts to contribute to a volume marking Gandhi's seventieth birthday. Smuts agreed and wrote a piece on 'Gandhi's Political Method' which reflected on 'our clash in the early days of the Union of South Africa' about the 'Indian question in South Africa'. Smuts referred to this question as a 'skeleton in our cupboard'. On a more personal note, he recalled Gandhi having made a pair of sandals for him while the Indian leader was imprisoned in South Africa. Smuts said he wore the sandals over many summers, adding in tones of humble brag: 'I am not worthy of standing in the shoes of so great a man!' (Smuts, 1949:280, 281, 282).[8]

Yet, Smuts's personal regard for Gandhi did not dissuade him from taking a hard line against Indian rights in their lawyerly political negotiations. The fact that, by the 1930s, both were acknowledged as world leaders, meant that they were able to regard one another as statesmen. Smuts was deeply aware that India had a long and distinctive civilisational history - an achievement that he did not concede to any existing African societies. He saw Asia as on the cusp of renaissance. Yet, he was adamant in his refusal to concede the principle of equal citizenship and voting rights to South African Indians and clashed with liberal Indian politicians V.S. Srinivasa Sastri and Tej Bahadur Sapru at the Commonwealth meetings in London in 1921 and 1923 on this matter (McKay, 2024: chap. 7). It is impossible to uncouple

8 Radhakrishnan invited Smuts to contribute to this volume on 12 January 1939, writing from All Souls College, Oxford (Smuts's Personal Correspondence, University of the Witwatersrand historical papers). Prior to this Radhakrishan sent Smuts a 17pp. typescript dated 25 March 1935, on `East and West'. The telegram to Gandhi was sent via Kunwar Sir Maharaj Singh Quyamans. My thanks to Sumathi Ramaswamy for helpful conversations about Radhakrishnan and Smuts.

Smuts's personal prejudices from his sense of vulnerability to right-wing political antagonists in South Africa - and surely worth remembering that for many white voters and Afrikaner Nationalists anti-Indian feeling was in some ways even more intense than anti-black sentiment. Much the same can be said of the anti-Semitism of the National Party in the 1930s. Indians and Jews were both seen as direct, proximate threats to white people by right-wing English- and Afrikaans-speakers and also as irredeemably 'foreign' (or, in the case of Jews, too easily assimilable). Yet even the most extreme segregationists did not question the fact that black people were 'natives' and therefore autochthonous.[9]

If Smuts made an exception for Gandhi (as he occasionally did for individual house-guests of colour or protégés such as Noni Jabavu or Radhabai Subbarayan), he saw Jews as exceptional too. For many South African Jews, Smuts was regarded as a valuable ally and source of protection. Smuts's close relationship with Chaim Weizmann, his role in the Balfour Declaration[10], his support of a Jewish national state and his anti-Nazism were all well known. Even so, Smuts's philo-Semitism bore distinct traces of stereotyping. In 1922, Smuts laid the foundation stone for a Jewish War Guild memorial in Johannesburg at which many communal figures were present. 'I always envy my Jewish friends', he said, amidst much laughter, 'for the easy way in which they raise money. It seems to be genius of the race to 'raise the wind'. It had taken a lot of effort to raise a small sum of

9 On anti-Semitism at this time, see Milton Shain, *A Perfect Storm. Antisemitism in South Africa 1930-1948* (Shain, 2015). For anti-Indianism, see e.g., G. Cronjé, *Afrika Sonder die Asiaat* (Cronjé, 1946). Anti-Indian and anti-Semitic racism was by no means confined to Afrikaner Nationalists. In pro-British Natal, anti-Indian hysteria led by the Dominion Party resulted in the restrictive `Pegging Act' of 1943 and the `Ghetto Act' of 1946.

10 If one includes the 1926 Balfour Declaration which resulted in a new formulation of the Commonwealth and which Smuts indirectly contributed to, it would be possible to say that Smuts had a role in two Balfour Declarations.

money for a Delville Wood Memorial, Smuts added by way of explanation. 'You Jews, on the contrary make no noise and no effort. It comes to you quite naturally (Laughter)'. Smuts went on to praise the little land of Palestine as a national home while assuring his audience that 'anti-Semitic feeling would never find a place' in South Africa. 'The Jews would always be welcomed here. They were part and parcel of South Africa' (*Rand Daily Mail*, 9 November 1922).

How to interpret the laughter? Relief, embarrassment, deference? We cannot be sure but this example of maladroit jocularity was not unique. In 1930, Smuts travelled to North America after giving his Rhodes lectures in Oxford. Speaking in New York at the Civic Forum Town Hall he reprised some of the themes about race relations which he had recently delivered, albeit to a very different and less appreciative audience. In response to a question from the floor, Smuts advised African Americans not to be hasty. He compared them to Africans, 'docile animals, the most patient of animals, next to the ass.' Tuskegee Institute Principal, Robert R. Moton, rose to challenge Smuts for his hurtful statement saying that the audience would otherwise leave with a 'bad taste' in the mouth; Smuts compounded his error by explaining that he had not meant to give offence and that he was in fact expressing 'admiration for the natives' (Edgar & Houser, 2016). The controversy threatened to ruin his next engagement at Howard College in Washington. This event had been arranged by the Phelps-Stokes Fund and was attended by a select group of African American leaders. Smuts rowed back on his remarks in New York a few days earlier, saying that he had now gained a 'new view of the American race question' – though as Edgar and Houser note, he later commented that his audience was lacking in the sense of humour that he found in 'South African natives' (Edgar & Houser, 2016:41).

Edgar and Houser's analysis of the response to Smuts's speeches reveal the depth of African American leaders' anger towards Smuts's condescending paternalism. W.E.B. Du Bois, who had been following the South African situation for many years (Du Bois played host to Sol Plaatje who visited the United

States a decade previously) remarked, 'It's no use telling us to go on dancing and singing. The question is, how far are the negroes in the Union of South Africa to become free men?' Smuts refused an invitation from Walter White to debate with Du Bois, offering a dismissive 'Life is too short'. William Pickens of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) likened Smuts to 'the average politician from Mississippi' (*New York Times*, 11 January 1930). Yet, Edgar and Houser point out that not all who attended the Howard meeting were quite so critical. The head of Howard's sociology department, Kelly Miller, thought Smuts was well-meaning and commented drily that their visitor had been provided with a 'liberal education'. Alain Locke sought to look beyond Smuts's 'infelicitous remark' in New York and considered that his visit to Howard and the discussion it elicited was overall constructive from the point of view of understanding a critical, if distant, racial situation (Edgar & Houser, 2016:15-16).

Du Bois, who appears not to have attended either the New York or Washington events, had a considered understanding of Smuts and of the South African situation. Having observed Smuts's contributions to the redesign, with Wilson, of the League of Nations, Du Bois wrote in 1925:

> Smuts is today, in his world aspects, the greatest protagonist of the white race.... He is fighting to insure the continued and eternal subordination of black to white in Africa; and he is fighting for peace and good will in a white Europe which can by union present a united front to the yellow, brown and black worlds. In all this he expresses bluntly, and yet not without finesse, what a powerful host of white folk believe but do not plainly say in Melbourne, New Orleans, San Francisco, Hongkong, (Du Bois, 1925:82, 83).

This was Smuts seen as draughtsman of the global colour line. In locating Smuts as a leading advocate of the white race – albeit with 'finesse' – Du Bois was also cognisant of the complex internal conditions of South Africa in which Smuts was operating, specifically, the fact that racial and class

oppression were fundamentally interlinked. Domination, Du Bois argued, 'involves two things - acquiescence of the darker peoples and agreement between capital and labor in white democracies.' But, in South Africa, the political situation made for curious 'bedfellows—English capital and African black labor against Dutch home-rulers and the trade unions. The combinations are as illogical as they are thought-producing.' Smuts's philosophy thus led to 'puzzling' results (Du Bois, 1925:84.)[11] As an activist, Du Bois saw Smuts as an adversary, as a fellow intellectual he appears to have been more understanding.

III.

Clumsy and offensive remarks in America, notwithstanding, Smuts's racism was for the most part disguised. It was often a corollary of his primary commitment to the defence of white 'civilisation' (Schwarz, 2011:292, 293). There is thus an underlying consistency in Smuts's lachrymose confessional letter to Daphne Moore in 1947 in which he construes Africa as a 'dark pool' and his *cri de coeur*, *A Century of Wrong* (1899) written a full half century earlier in which he fantasised about the future while railing against the forces of British Imperialism and capitalism gathering to overthrow the Boer republics. Here, Smuts dreams about 'the distant prospect of Bantu children playing amongst the gardens and ruins of the sunny south around thousands of graves in which the descendants of the European heroes of Faith and Freedom lie sleeping.' Why, Smuts asks, has this occurred? 'An invisible spirit of mockery answers, 'Civilisation is a failure; the Caucasian is played out!' and the dreamer awakens with the echo of the word 'Gold! Gold! Gold!' in his ears.' The confused and confusing image of a future racial apocalypse triggered by capitalist greed is likened to Xerxes' attack on 'little Greece' and the imminent attempt at 'Infanticide' about to be perpetrated by Britain, 'gentle and kind-hearted

11 Du Bois was likely thinking of the contradictions shown up by the 1922 Rand Revolt.

Mother of Nations'. Impassioned to the point of incoherence, this passage may be interpreted either as an insight into the opaque mind of the 'inner Smuts's or else set aside as a peroration, a by-product of Smuts's last-minute effort to appeal to the better instincts of anti-war opinion in Britain (Reitz, 1900:55).[12]

There were just a few occasions when Smuts addressed the question of colour in a deliberate, considered manner. These set-piece meditations require close attention. One of the most notable examples was his Rhodes lectures in Oxford in 1929 which are laden with racial paternalism. The second lecture, 'Native Policy in Africa', followed his talk on 'African Settlement' and made the case for pursuing a white-led trusteeship policy in British Africa. A central claim was that segregation in South Africa was fully in accord with Lugardian principles of indirect rule which, Smuts argued, had a precedent in Rhodes's 1894 Glen Grey Act. While Smuts decried slavery, he set himself firmly against its opposite: egalitarian-based assimilationism. A compromise solution was therefore required. 'It is clear that a race so unique, and so different in its mentality and its cultures from those of Europe, requires a policy very unlike that which would suit Europeans.' Smuts thus mobilised cultural relativist arguments derived from anthropology to make the case for segregation as 'the fullest freest development of [the empire's] peoples along their own specific lines.' To reach this position – and foreshadowing his remarks in the United States – he characterised black people as 'child-like' and possessed of a 'happy-go-lucky disposition' (Smuts, 1930:67, 78, 75). This patronising trope was shaped by his experience as a young man growing up in the agrarian Western Cape amidst the regulating relations of deference required by servants in relation to their masters. Yet Smuts took care not to set any bar on ultimate progress.

12 *A Century of Wrong* was issued by F.W. Reitz with a preface by W.T. Stead. It is generally believed to have been written by Smuts and J. de Villiers Roos. Smuts never claimed authorship.

J.H. Oldham, a leading Christian ecumenist and ethicist, issued a rapid rebuttal of his Oxford lectures by way of a 70-page pamphlet in which he defended missionary work in Africa. Oldham (like the anti-Imperialist J.A. Hobson) was not opposed to colonialism if it brought benefits to subject peoples, nor did he question the principle that African development should be led by 'the higher civilization'. At issue were the methods employed as well as who the ultimate beneficiaries were. Whereas Smuts spoke for the expansion of a white dominion as the spearhead of civilisational advance in Africa, Oldham was concerned that this should not impinge on 'equal justice and equal opportunity' for black people. Oldham's response was thus more a critique than a fundamental repudiation of Smuts's assumptions. It was intended to shift the 'equilibrium' so as to ensure that black people 'be considered as ends in themselves, and to share in the benefits and privileges of the society of which they form a part.' He quoted the ANC's demand for 'recognition of their rights as human beings' to make this point (Oldham, 1930:20-1.)[13]

Oldham had previously published a critique of the doctrine of race superiority which attacked the scientific racism of figures such as Gobineau (Oldham, 1924). Smuts would have little difficulty in endorsing such arguments against racial science. In 1917, in a speech given at the Savoy Hotel in London (a week after he delivered his major speech on the Commonwealth to a joint sitting of parliament), Smuts spoke with unusual frankness about the challenges of achieving national unity between English and Dutch and the challenges of bringing together 'different racial strains and different political tendencies' (Smuts, 1917:82). He observed that all 'great Imperial peoples really are a mixture of various

13 While critical of Smuts's stereotyped view of African mentality – as well has his lack of detailed empirical knowledge of African conditions - Oldham's tone was generally polite. The respect shown to Smuts by his British audience may help to explain why he thought he could get way with making similar arguments to those of the Rhodes lectures in New York and Washington in front of a mixed audience.

stocks' and took particular issue with the 'Germanised Englishman, Houston Chamberlain' and his fallacious doctrine of racial purity. From dealing with problems of white nationhood, Smuts segued into a discussion of 'that other larger question of the black man's future'. Why, he mused, had the traces of civilisation in Timbuktu or Zimbabwe receded into 'barbarism'? (Smuts, 1917:85).

The potential for evolutionary retrogression was a common trope in Smuts's thought, fitting with his predilection for long-range thinking. In terms even more graphic than those he used in his 1929 Rhodes lectures, Smuts proceeded to lay out the principles of segregation in South Africa, noting that the recent conquest of the German colonies in Africa opened up new routes for white expansionism or, as one may think of it today, racial replacement. Smuts rejected intermixture and berated Christian missionaries who preached 'full belief in human brotherhood' (Smuts, 1917:86). Experience was instead showing the importance of 'creating parallel institutions on parallel lines with institutions for whites.' Rather than 'mixing up black and white in the old haphazard way, which instead of lifting up the black degraded the white, we are now trying to lay down a policy of keeping them apart as much as possible in our institutions'. It might 'take a hundred years to work out' a general policy, but keeping apart may ultimately 'be the solution of our native problem' (Smuts, 1917:88, 89).

Ruminating in this way, Smuts laid out in bare detail key elements of the segregationist mindset that had been developing in South Africa over more than a decade since Godfrey Lagden's 1903 to 1905 *South African Native Affairs Commission* and the deliberations of discussion groups such as the Johannesburg Fortnightly Club. He also added a reminder (conveniently crediting Lord Selborne who was chairing this meeting) that the Act of Union made allowance for the future incorporation of the Protectorates into South Africa. There was little original thinking on display in this talk delivered to a small audience. His presentation was less polished than in 1929 when the dual pressures of speaking at a named lecture series in Oxford and in the immediate aftermath of the

bruising 'black peril' election must have weighed on him. For these very reasons his Savoy speech might be seen as more revealing of his thoughts. He gave voice to these ideas during a fertile moment in his conception of the Commonwealth and the League – more or less midway between his expression of the inadvisability of perpetuating the non-racial franchise (as revealed in his correspondence with Merriman and Hobson in 1906-8) and his fuller discussion of 'native policy' in 1929. The former was influenced by the intense politics of closer Union, the latter by the gathering momentum of Hertzogite segregation. We thus see in the 1917 Savoy speech the evolution of Smuts's views on race and observe, too, his inclination to defer resolution of the problem to an indefinite point in the future.

The final occasion in which Smuts addressed race in a concerted manner was in his January 1942 address to the Institute of Race Relations. This speech was conditioned by the acute threat of a Nazi victory in the war, the revival of mass politics in South Africa, and the need to ensure that black support for the Allied effort could be relied upon. Just a year later, the ANC was to issue its major manifesto, *Africans' Claims* (1943) which set out an ambitious statement of unconditional citizenship and democratic rights by way of a reworking of the Atlantic Charter adapted to South African conditions. (Smuts is explicitly called out in the document for his assurance that the post-war world would be based upon 'the principles enunciated in the Atlantic Charter'.)'

Smuts's 1942 address is often remembered for his statement that 'Isolation has gone, and I am afraid that segregation has fallen upon evil days too', widely interpreted as signalling a relaxation of racial restrictions in urban areas (*RDM*, 23 January 1942).[14] Insofar as he addressed the idea of race, Smuts condemned Nazi race theories outright

14 The phrase `I am afraid' which is sometimes excised when this line is quoted, is susceptible to different interpretation. It is likely not a statement of fear so much as a statement that there is no alternative and an indication of his own ambivalence.

(though as Noel Garson points out, without mentioning anti-Semitism) (Garson, 2007:169). The form of Smuts's argument accorded closely with his previous attempts to find a middle way between extremes: in this case, a compromise between the *herrenvolk* ideology inflaming militant Afrikanerdom and renewed liberal-democratic demands for racial equality emanating from elements within his own party. Yet, he could do no more than offer the tired trope of trusteeship as 'another viewpoint' for consideration. For Smuts, 'trusteeship' was a matter of ethical duty and religious obligation held by the guardian on behalf of the ward. It was also a key means to align his outlook with British colonial thinking. There was no acknowledgement in Smuts's 1942 speech either of African agency or of rights, certainly not as Smuts would conceive of these in his uplifting contribution to the Preamble of the United Nations constitution. Educated liberal-minded white people were his target audience and Smuts duly appealed to their better instincts by dealing in the currency of enlightened self-interest. There were some notable rhetorical shifts, reflecting the growing mood of liberal expectation and intimations of post-war reconstruction. Garson notes that Smuts's 1942 address dropped any mention of miscegenation or of 'barbarism'. Difference was coded instead in the more flexible discourse of culture (Garson, 2007:171).

Smuts's address gave some liberals reason to hope that substantial reform was now part of the government's agenda. Jon Hyslop argues that Smuts's 1942 speech was not merely cosmetic. Its attack on European master-race ideology reflected genuine, existential anxieties about imminent Nazi military victory; its recognition of a permanent black presence in urban South Africa represented a substantial shift away from older segregationist ideas based on rural tribalism (Hyslop, 2012:451-4). Smuts's address was widely reported in the African press but his words had little discernible impact on black politics: the ANC was simply no longer interested in lobbying for concessions and now demanded rights as of right. In America, Howard University historian, Rayford W. Logan, writing in *The Crisis*, presented a detailed account of

Smuts's views on race as they evolved from 1917 to the present. Logan concluded that 'whatever guise he may present his end policy, good-will, justice or trusteeship, segregation is the fundamental basis. The only exception is the unescapable need of using Africans in industry so that South Africa may maintain her important position in world affairs.' (Logan, 1943:279).

When Smuts recommended adopting a spirit of 'racial indifference' to a predominantly liberal University of Cape Town community in 1937, this was in the context of a desire to inspire a new generation of graduates; yet, he was also prevaricating by resorting to elliptical reasoning and promises. In 1942, Smuts was recommending colour blindness once more in a contemplative university setting dominated by white liberals but he stopped short of promoting non-racism as an active political principle or as an essential component of a postwar democratic age. The strategy was counterproductive: it merely served to goad right-wing racial zealots as well as disappoint the expectant liberals who took Smuts at his word and placed their hopes in his leadership.

IV.

Aside from his 1942 address to the Institute of Race Relations, Smuts did not think much about a future racial settlement. He preferred to spend what little free time he had during the war years contemplating the deep past. When not engaged in fighting against Nazism, Smuts turned to the study of South African palaeontology, geology and rock art. He was responsible for bringing the eminent French rock art specialist, Abbé Breuil, to South Africa from occupied Europe to study Bushman paintings while continuing to support the research of van Riet Lowe. As a patron of prehistory and a key promoter of the South African Archaeological Survey, Smuts did not take a stand between the speculative racial diffusionism of Breuil and the professional work conducted by van Riet Lowe and Goodwin who were seeking to deracialise prehistory's assumptions. Instead, Smuts stood aloof, content to harness such intellectual activity for the promotion of broad white

South Africanism and scientism. There was also a personal element to this. In the midst of war, Smuts purported to find private solace in the idea of evolutionary deep time and the interconnectedness of human prehistory: his broader holistic cosmology, mixed with his Christian ethics, found optimism in the future (Dubow, 2019). In a foreword to Breuil's book, *Beyond the Bounds of History* (1949) Smuts offered this thought:

> On the time-scale of history which covers only a few thousand years we do not see much essential progress. Institutions change, forms of human life and existence change, but man himself remains much the same, [...] To see the true picture we have to take a larger time-scale. We have to call in the witness of prehistory. And then the answer is no longer in doubt. The progress physically, mentally and socially is almost beyond belief (Breuil, 1949:8-9).

But time was not on Smuts's side. In the rapidly changing domestic political environment of the 1940s and with the advent of sweeping decolonisation in South Asia, the *Ou Baas*'s genial blandishments and his inveterate paternalism were diminishing assets both in South Africa and abroad. Smuts's belief in white-led Western Christian civilisation was rapidly becoming anachronistic. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's evisceration of Smuts at the United Nations in 1946 revived the strong criticisms of him at Commonwealth conferences levelled by Sastri in 1921 and Sapru in 1923. These diplomatic occasions revealed the inadequacy of Smuts's studied ambiguity. It was exposed with devastating consequences in the 1948 election campaign when Smuts found no convincing argument against apartheid (Thakur, 2017).

During election campaigns Smuts never sought to inflame racial tensions as Hertzog notoriously did in 1929 and Malan in 1948 but he could no longer contain or deflect the populist appeal of supercharged racial rhetoric. He did not at any point take a lead in promoting segregationist policies but nor did he challenge them convincingly or with conviction. Reviewing the second volume of Hancock's still unsurpassed

biography of Smuts the year after Verwoerd's assassination, A.J.P. Taylor shrewdly observed that Smuts 'evaded difficulties in the hope that they would gradually disappear and was bewildered when instead they grew stronger'. In Taylor's view the 'present position of South Africa, rigidly racialist and isolated at the extreme end of the continent, is the measure of his failure.' In respect of race, this failure was as much a matter of acts of omission as commission, of seeking to rationalise race away without adequately confronting its stark political reality (Taylor, 1968).

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8. Smuts and the Politics of Segregation

The Prosecution of Pass Laws Under the United Party Government

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Introduction

Jan Smuts's second term as Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa (1939-48) was a tumultuous period. During a low ebb in Allied fortunes in early 1942 when the country's World War II effort was his priority, Smuts was faced by a host of challenges on the domestic front. Not only did a sizeable number of white Afrikaners identify with Hitler's Germany, but Nazi sympathisers engaged in acts of sabotage and spying (Furlong, 1991; Kleynhans, 2021). Moreover, the Union's wartime industrialisation had stimulated economic growth which increased the need for unskilled labour in the manufacturing sector and effectively diluted the colour bar in the workplace. And in the face of criticisms that this growth had contributed to 'swamping' the cities by African workers, the so-called 'native question' that had historically been kept out of party politics became a contentious issue. Against this backdrop, Smuts questioned the efficacy of segregation in a well-publicised speech in January 1942 to the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR). His admission that segregation 'had fallen on evil days' insinuated that the United Party government was prepared to concede that the policy of segregation had failed and signalled that the government was rethinking the status of urban Africans.

As surprising as it might have been for some, Smuts's admission was not entirely unexpected. By the late 1930s, it was recognised that the success or failure of segregation would be decided in the cities. Officials in the Native Affairs Department (NAD) had attached more significance to attempts by the UP government under J.B.M. Hertzog, Smuts's predecessor as premier, to impose control over African influx into the urban areas than over either the political or the territorial aspects of the policy (Davenport, 1974). But officials alone did not shape policy; they had to weigh the vested interests of several stakeholders in the future of the cities. Employers in the burgeoning industrial sector and managers of newly created parastatals believed that the pass laws should be refined to make them more efficient and cost effective. Middle-class suburban white people would have preferred to keep the cities white without foregoing their servants, while working class white people regarded black unskilled labourers as unfair competition for jobs. Although passes were resented by Africans obliged to carry them, resistance to them before the war had been ad hoc and localised. Shear (2013) has argued that the suspension of the pass laws in May 1942 was not motivated by the manufacturing sector's demand for labour nor the state's incapacity to police transgressions. Rather, he ascribes the relaxation of the laws to a combination of official anxieties about the loyalty of urban Africans at a time when the Union was vulnerable to attack by the Axis powers and the influence of white liberals in the Smuts pro-war coalition. Although he refers to 'reformist opinion and organization', there is no mention of specific institutions nor any attempt to disaggregate the liberal lobby. And while Shear (2013) deftly delineates the interests of competing pressure groups in the prosecution (or not) of the pass laws, he overlooks the role of the local authorities.

The suspension of the pass laws coincided with and was connected to the UP government's efforts to extend welfare benefits to improve the quality of life of urban Africans. Posel (2005:65) has argued that the social welfare reforms initiated by the Smuts government in the early 1940s were not exigent

wartime measures but reflected a growing faith in the ability of the state and public authorities to shape society for the better. Posel and a number of other essays in the volume edited by Dubow and Jeeves (Bonner, 2005) demonstrate how this agenda was translated into a package of - racially differentiated - reforms in the spheres of education, health, housing, pensions, and so on.[1] This arguably suggests that Africans were to be regarded as citizens - albeit second-class citizens without the franchise. Hyslop (2012) has unpacked the transnational imperatives that informed these 'sweeping welfarist and reformist initiatives'. He attaches considerable significance to Smuts's 1942 SAIRR speech and argues that it reflects the influence of international humanist discourses on Smuts's paternal racist mindset. But Hyslop (2012) ignores the ambiguities in Smuts's remarks that raised the expectations of liberals but also gave conservatives ammunition to argue that segregation as enacted in the Hertzog's 1936 Native Bills[2] was no longer viable and required stricter enforcement rather than liberalisation. The working of influx control was a key issue for critics to the left and right of the UP government. The prosecution of the pass laws created tensions between administrators and police officers, as well as central and local authorities. Accordingly, the politics of segregation was to prove a critical issue for the Smuts government.

Notwithstanding Smuts's unchallenged authority in the UP and his extraordinary wartime powers, we should not overstate his ability to influence the implementation and practice of policy. Influx controls that included a suite of measures to control the movement of Africans are a case in point. They were widely but not necessarily strictly nor uniformly applied throughout the Union. When the government instructed the South African Police to curtail

1 See chapters by Nattrass, Seekings, Posel, Jeeves and Phillips.

2 The so-called Hertzog Bills comprised The Native Representation Bill, The Native Trust and Land Act Bill and the Native Urban Areas Amendment Bill. The Bills were sponsored by the then United Party premier J.B.M. Hertzog and hence were associated with his name. For elaboration of their content and significance, see Dubow, 1989:131-76.

arrests for petty infringements of the pass laws, it did so against the better judgement of senior law enforcement authorities (Shear, 2013:208-10). However, in certain cities in the Cape province where the pass laws were not enforced prior to 1942, the response of local authorities was confused and inconsistent. This chapter provides a study of how the municipalities of Cape Town and Port Elizabeth tried to balance their own labour requirements with the provisions of central government directives. By examining case studies of influx control we are better able to understand why the moratorium on arrests for pass law offences was short-lived and inconsistently applied. And we should also be better able to grasp why the Smuts government's equivocation on 'native policy', and influx control in particular, contributed to his political downfall.

The Administration of Native Affairs and the Policy of Urban Segregation

In order to understand the purpose and (dys)functionality of the influx control system,[3] we should first examine the working of the system of administration that was responsible for urban Africans. The South Africa Act of 1909 effected the separation of Native Administration from that of other government departments. Section 147 reserved to the Governor-General-in-Council (i.e. acting on the advice of the Cabinet) the control and administration of Native Affairs throughout the Union (Union of South Africa, 1948:3). As Supreme Chief of all Africans in the country, the Governor-General was granted the authority to legislate by proclamation in respect of Native Affairs. In 1927 the Native Administration Act conferred these special executive and legislative powers on the Minister of Native Affairs. He had the right to amend by proclamation any law applicable in Native areas (defined

3 Bonner (2005) points out the ineffectiveness of urban policy and administration, as well as the absence of capacity, of the Native Affairs Department in his study of grassroots struggles in Benoni. This study of Cape Town and Port Elizabeth bears this out.

as areas within which two thirds of the population consisted of Natives). For the purposes of administration, the Union was divided into several large districts under the control of a Chief Native Commissioner, directly responsible to the Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA). Smaller units within these districts were under the control of a Native Commissioner, or a magistrate, or both. Where an area had a predominantly African population, the magistrate was almost always an officer of the NAD. In areas where there was a large white population as well, the magistrate was usually an official of the Department of Justice who held a watching brief from the Native Commissioner for those Africans who fell under his jurisdiction. Conversely, officers of the NAD asserted primacy over other departments where their responsibilities impinged on the administration of Africans (Union of South Africa, 1935-6:12).

Native Administration in the urban areas was the subject of divided control. Municipalities controlled and administered their African populations in terms of by-laws based on legislation and regulations tabled by the Minister of Native Affairs and passed by the legislature (Davenport, 1971:1-6). But the NAD was responsible for administering the policy of the government of the day. The NAD had certain supervisory functions which were largely exercised through circulars, memoranda, and so on from the NAD to town clerks and, hence, to other municipal officers. In addition, Inspectors of Urban Areas were appointed by the SNA to undertake visits to townships in person. In some respects, local authorities served as agents of the NAD: in the first place, the municipality accepted responsibility to provide its African population with essential services, housing and financial management in common with its responsibility to render such services to all ratepayers; secondly, a separate municipal department assumed responsibility for township administration and labour regulation. The locations or townships were administered by Location Superintendents (or Managers of Native Affairs in the larger centres) and their staff who were employees of the municipalities. Superintendents usually met with the municipality's Native Affairs Committee on a regular

basis and were obliged to submit reports on the state of affairs in the townships under their charge. The provision of services such as water, sewerage, refuse removal, roads, transport, and healthcare were assigned to the relevant municipal departments. In addition, a specific municipal department assumed responsibility for the provision of housing in townships under its jurisdiction. And the municipal treasurer was required to keep a separate Native Revenue Account that comprised all income and expenditure relating to Native Affairs (Bekker & Humphries, 1985:16-17).

The principle that urban local authorities were responsible for Africans within their boundaries was enshrined in the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act. And because the Act was permissive rather than prescriptive, local authorities were accorded some scope to frame their own policies in respect of their African population. In some cases, municipalities guarded their autonomy from the central state rather jealously and pursued divergent practices. Although there were often tensions between the NAD and the municipalities over specific issues, overall, their respective interests were not irreconcilable and so relatively good relations between the local authorities and the NAD prevailed. Indeed, the NAD had to rely on the cooperation of local authorities because it arguably lacked the capacity to ensure effective control of urban Africans without it. Moreover, the municipalities had discretionary powers in administering African townships, albeit subject to broad policy guidelines from the NAD established in legislation and stipulated in circulars (Bekker & Humphries, 1985:2). Rather than assume direct responsibility for urban Africans, the NAD sought to implement central state policies by securing the consent or acquiescence of at least three constituencies: employers of urban African labour, Africans living and seeking work in the cities, and the municipal administrators of its policy (Posel, 1991:149). In other words, the NAD served as an interlocutor between central government, local authorities and other stakeholders in negotiating the implementation of policies in respect of urban Africans.

If jurisdiction over urban Africans was ill-defined, the broad framework of the policy of segregation was well-established by 1936. According to Dubow (1989:180), segregation was essentially a 'defensive strategy aimed at consolidating white supremacy in the face of the challenge posed by the emergence of an African proletariat'. There were competing discourses and strategies for solving the problem of how to secure a regular supply of cheap labour without constraining economic productivity and growth (Maylam, 1990:57). 'Idealists' envisaged that Africans would be allowed to stay in urban areas for only as long as their labour was required. This thinking drew on the doctrine of 'Stallardism' which regarded urban Africans as 'temporary sojourners' who should minister to the needs of white people in the cities (Davenport, 1991:524).[4]'Realists' argued that the demands of industrialisation entailed acceptance of the fact that Africans were in the towns to stay and that the authorities could do no more than regulate their movement. This approach is evident in the suppressed Young-Barrett Committee Report (1937) that rejected the notion that the towns belong essentially to the white people (Davenport, 1974:81). This line of thinking came to be known as 'Faganism' following the recommendations made but never enacted by the committee chaired by the Minister of Native Affairs in Smuts's post-war cabinet. Many senior NAD officials were schooled in the tradition of Cape liberalism (Duncan, 1995:214), but these values became increasingly anachronistic as the politics of segregation was polarised. Most United Party members were conservative segregationists. There were a few liberals amongst its MPs but only Smuts's Deputy Prime Minister, J.H. Hofmeyr, revealed a tendency to swim against the tide. However, Smuts believed that Hofmeyr was out of step with white public opinion (Lewsen, 1987:110-111).[5] Although Hofmeyr deputised for him

4 Cited in the *Report of the Transvaal Local Government Commission, 1921*, TP 1/1922. The Commission was chaired by Colonel C.F. Stallard, a 'hardline' segregationist, who gave his name to the doctrine.

5 Hofmeyr arguably proved a liability for Smuts in the 1948 Election.

during his lengthy absences overseas, he still doubted his heir apparent's leadership skills. And Hofmeyr would never cross the *Ou Baas*.[6] Thus there was no liberal caucus as such within the UP that debated and fashioned 'native policy'. However, senior civil servants were often able to obtain the confidence of ministers and their backing for their initiatives, especially when said ministers lacked knowledge of their portfolios. And these officials could be influenced by colleagues as well as lobbyists outside of government circles.

Douglas Smit, who became the Union's longest-serving Secretary for Native Affairs (1934-45), was a career civil servant appointed by Smuts, when the latter was Deputy Prime Minister in Hertzog's cabinet.[7] Smit brought to bear a wealth of experience from his time in the Department of Justice and he set about building a formidable administrative apparatus. The capacity and know-how of the NAD was bolstered by the emergence of a professional discourse in urban Native Administration (Robinson, 1991, 1999:66, 74). In the absence of any special interest in the administration of Africans by successive Ministers of Native Affairs in the UP government, Smit assumed responsibility for translating policy into action. This is well-illustrated in respect of the implementation of influx control measures in terms of the 1937 Native Law Amendment Act. The Act established the principle of the removal of 'redundant' Africans from urban areas, by means of a biennial census which would determine the labour requirements of each area, and the number of Africans who were surplus in this regard. Smit seems to have regarded the legislation as a mandate for increasing NAD jurisdiction in the urban areas (Union of South Africa, 1938:19). In September 1938, the NAD convened a conference in Pretoria with representatives of municipalities and in the opening address Smuts (reading a speech prepared by Smit) stressed that the government had now taken the initiative to enforce influx

6 Literally 'old master' (Afrikaans). An honorific title that suggests the bearer deserves respectful submission.

7 For further biographical and career information see Bell (1978:3-7).

control because the local authorities had failed to implement measures themselves. In response to his pressure, 205 urban areas had implemented the provisions of the Act by 1939 and Smit expressed his confidence that 'the next few years will mark a radical change in the conditions under which Natives live in urban areas' (Union of South Africa, 1940:22). The 'radical change' which he envisaged was in the development of better housing and living conditions for urban Africans but, at the same time, he wished to tighten up on the administration of influx controls. Before the war, Smit clearly had no intention of relinquishing NAD control over urban Africans nor delegating much responsibility to municipalities.

So how can we explain the shift in Smit's position in respect of influx controls? Why did he come to advocate greater leniency in their implementation? Bell (1978:153-4) attaches considerable weight to the testimony given before the Inter-Department Committee on the Social, Health and Economic Conditions of Urban Natives chaired by Smit. The Committee heard from liberals associated with the Joint Councils (JCs) and the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR).[8] The SAIRR grew out of the Joint Council movement and had overlapping membership that included prominent white liberals like Senators Edgar Brookes and J.D. Rheinallt Jones, as well as Native Representatives (NRs) Margaret Ballinger[9] and Donald Molteno.[10] They constituted a liberal caucus in Parliament and conferred regularly with government Ministers and officials. The NRs enjoyed reputations as indefatigable defenders of the rights of their African constituents after they were removed from the Cape Provincial common voters' roll in terms of the 1936 legislation. The JCs included African

8 For a detailed history of the Joint Councils see Haines (1991). For a history of South African liberalism see Rich (1987).

9 Margaret Ballinger served as Native Representative between 1937 and 1960. Her husband was a prominent trade unionist. See Mouton (1997) for a biography of the couple. Margaret Ballinger penned her own political biography. See Ballinger (1969).

10 Molteno served as a Native Representative in parliament from 1937 to 1948. For a biography see Scher (1979).

members of statutory bodies like the Natives' Representative Council (NRC) and Advisory Boards, as well other politically moderate leaders who favoured gradual change. Those affiliated to the JCs and SAIRR represented a cross-section of viewpoints but shared a common goal of African upliftment. Liberal academics offered input to a plethora of commissions during the 1940s tasked with making recommendations on Africans' social and economic conditions. For instance, Alfred Hoernle and Rheinallt Jones, who submitted a memorandum to the Smit Committee, stressed that industrialisation caused the breakdown of African societies in rural reserves and that this called for the amelioration of the living conditions of urban Africans (Rich, 1987:71). To be sure, the principle of segregation was seldom rejected out of hand even by those opposed to certain of its discriminatory features and white liberals of the inter-war years were usually content to promote philanthropic projects that improved the social conditions of Africans (Haines, 1991:438). The percolation of liberal discourse in the JCs and SAIRR might have nudged members into adopting a more critical stance towards government policies but failed to permeate white society at large where reactionaries harped on about on the 'evils' of the cities and the supposed threats posed by the breakdown of racial barriers and miscegenation.

The Smit Committee heard that the pass laws were a major source of grievance and that technical transgressions led to criminal prosecutions and convictions of workers that caused a loss in labour productivity. It recommended that it would be 'better to face the abolition of the pass laws' rather than perpetuate the status quo. Clearly the pragmatic Smit was persuaded that the enforcement of the pass laws exacted a high political cost and was expensive to administer. However, controls on the movement of Africans would remain. A network of labour exchanges to be set up on a voluntary basis in all urban centres would replace the pass laws. In industrial centres the registration of service contracts would be continued, and curfews - albeit shortened - would be retained. These measures did not amount to a laissez-faire approach

to African urbanisation. The Committee also recognised the pervasive effects of poverty in the reserves and noted how migrant labour undermined family life.[11] It also noted the equally harmful effects of poor wages and recommended the recognition of African trade unions (Lewsen, 1987:113-4). Bell (1978:34) insists that the recommendations of the Smit Committee did not herald the radical change in policy with which they were commonly credited and on which white liberal and moderate African political hopes were raised. But other historians have argued that the Smit Committee reflected a major change in official thinking and that Smuts - who previewed its findings before it became public knowledge - was persuaded to adopt a range of liberal reforms because of its findings (Lewsen, 1987:105; Davenport, 1991:306-7).

As a civil servant, Smit was not expected to express personal views on policy matters but to endorse the government's segregationist policy and its manner of implementation. Therefore, he had not previously expressed himself publicly on the matter. Emboldened by Smuts's admission before the SAIRR that segregation had failed, Smit went on record as saying that segregation was 'unworkable' and that no solution to South Africa's 'racial problem' was to be found along the lines of further 'repressive measures'(Bell, 1978:5-7, 25). Thus he championed the moratorium in respect of the arrest of the pass law offenders that was introduced in 1942.

Smit's stance was not necessarily shared by all officials in the NAD, but he was responsible for improving the Department's reputation in liberal circles during the 1940s. He was called 'a liberal handicapped by his official position' by R.F.A. Hoernlé. But the Professor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand was likely mistaken. Smit still reckoned that the need for influx control was of paramount importance to ensure improvements in the living

11 These issues had been previously identified by a conference held in Johannesburg in October 1938 as factors in the fostering of juvenile delinquency. See Posel, 2005:64, 82.

standards of urban Africans. 'Control' was the operative word in Smit's vocabulary, but it did not figure in the lexicon of liberalism (Bell, 1978:12, 22-3, 82). Smit, like his mentor Smuts, was prepared to recognise that African detribalisation and urbanisation was irreversible but clung to the notion that white trusteeship of African interests was still necessary. Thus, his paternalism would not allow him to fully embrace the view that industrialisation would render the social and political colour bar obsolescent. Hence Smit was not yet ready to abandon altogether the notion that segregation was the long-term solution to the 'native problem',

It is likely that Smuts discussed the contents and findings of the Smit Committee with his SNA but not necessarily his senior cabinet colleagues. Still, they fell in line with the new direction of Smuts's pronouncement. Smit apparently exercised considerable sway over the then Minister of Native Affairs, Deneys Reitz. The MNA spoke out firmly against passes at the same time as his senior official was calling for the government to ease up on them. Smit was also responsible for persuading Reitz's more conservative successor and staunch segregationist, Major Piet van der Byl, appointed by Smuts on the eve of the 1943 Election, that Africans should be regarded as permanent residents in the towns. Van der Byl admitted to knowing absolutely nothing about Native Affairs and having learnt everything from Smit. He appeared to endorse the opinion of his Secretary when he informed Parliament that 'the imposition of any pass law at this time would be deeply resented and is impossible' (Duncan, 1985:29, 108, 212). But he qualified his statement so as to mollify those in the opposition benches who insisted that the suspension of passes had occasioned an increase in vagrancy, crime, squatting and worker militancy - all of which contributed to crisis of confidence for advocates of white trusteeship and reactionary responses from white supremacists (Shear, 2013:226-7). Van der Byl's dissembling was tantamount to an acknowledgment that he viewed the easing of passes as a wartime contingency.

Meanwhile, the UP government faced growing criticism from the NRC for, inter alia, its refusal to amend the pass

laws and accord direct African representation at all levels of government from municipal councils to Parliament. Following Smuts's seeming indifference to the appeals of the NRC and Smit's peremptory dealings with its members, the government effectively severed its line of communication with moderate African leaders. Most councillors were active members of the African National Congress and their frustration with constitutional channels led them to embrace extra-parliamentary politics. Under the leadership of Alfred Xuma and radicalised by its youth wing, the ANC had shifted its strategy from appealing for concessions to demanding political rights. The ANC played a prominent part in co-ordinating the nationwide anti-pass campaign of 1944 when it insisted upon their abolition and not merely their suspension.

The suspension of the pass laws did not herald wholesale changes in the policies of the Smuts government. As the tide of war turned in favour of the Allies and his stature as a statesman rose, Smuts devoted more attention to international commitments than his duties at home. Buoyed by the UP's resounding 1943 Election victory which he regarded as a vote of confidence in his wartime leadership, Smuts felt confident enough to deflect demands from white voters for tackling the 'native problem' as he dismissed the notion that the situation had reached crisis proportions (Minkley & Rousseau, 1995). Notwithstanding his previous pronouncement on the failure of segregation, he now inclined towards the view that there was no need for hasty or drastic changes to 'native policy' (Dubow, 2005:12). This stasis can be partly explained by the composition of Smuts's cabinet and personnel changes in the NAD. As we have seen, Van der Byl was ambivalent on influx control and seemed to believe that the suspension of passes was a wartime expedient. And the retirement of Smit as SNA in 1945 did not result in significant changes to the disposition of the NAD. In fact, Smit remained an influential figure in government circles and with senior civil servants. His input was frequently solicited by his successor Gordon Mears when compiling departmental memoranda or preparing speeches for the Minister of Native Affairs, Deputy Prime Minister

Hofmeyr and Smuts himself. As a confidante of Smuts and as Deputy Chairman of the Native Affairs Commission (NAC), Smit continued to exercise influence on the framing of government policy.[12]

The NAC had been in existence since 1920 and comprised white 'experts' appointed by the government to advise it on formulating policy and preparing legislation. The NAC was chaired by the SNA and served as a sounding board for the NAD. Mears sought to put his stamp on native administration with the production of two memoranda in 1947 entitled *A Progressive Programme for Native Administration* and *Progressive Native Policy* which proposed, inter alia, a larger, more representative Natives' Representative Council and, furthermore, that the Advisory Boards Congress (ABC) should have representation on the reconstituted NRC. As a statutory body, the ABC should represent the views of 'urbanised Natives' to the government and exercise executive and administrative authority in respect of African townships (Bell, 1978:101-2; Davenport, 1981). Mears's reforms envisaged delegating powers to both a rural and urban African political elite (Rich, 1987:108-9). However, following Smit's input, Smuts approved the memoranda in attenuated form and they, in turn, were approved in broad principle by the NAC (Bell, 1978:104). But these proposals failed to satisfy the NRC that had resolved to adjourn until such time as the government gave serious consideration to its

12 Although Smit had been the prime mover in the suspension of the pass laws, an overview of his career shows that he was inconsistent when it came to the imposition thereof: enforcing their application at first but then insisting they be eased when circumstances dictated. This suggests that Smit was more of a realist than an idealist. Bell (1978) contends that Smit was a paternalist when he was SNA who became increasingly liberal after he left office, especially after being nominated as a UP MP. Lewsen (1987:114) calls him a 'paternalist liberal', whereas I consider the label 'liberal paternalist' more apposite. Whatever his political persuasion and despite his inconsistencies, there seems little doubt that Smit was at least partly responsible for the UP government's pragmatic approach to towards urban Africans towards the end of his tenure as SNA.

demands for it to become a properly representative executive and administrative body rather than a purely advisory one (Bell, 1978:80-83, 94, 97).

The NRC's demands for meaningful reforms had repeatedly fallen on deaf ears. Following the repression of the 1946 mineworkers' strike and the refusal of the government to grant Africans the right to engage in collective bargaining, it had adjourned indefinitely. In attempting to defuse the situation, Smuts sought the mediation of Margaret Ballinger. During their consultations, Smuts expressed himself in favour of the gradual liberalisation of 'native policy' and was encouraged by Ballinger to start afresh. For her part, Ballinger was encouraged to believe that Smuts was moving in a more liberal direction with regard to 'native policy'. However, this proved to be nothing more than wishful thinking, for Smuts was not inclined to alienate white public opinion and so the impasse with the NRC dragged on (Ballinger, 1969:125; Mouton, 1997:155, 171). Having chosen to ignore the entreaties of the liberal lobby, Smuts shelved all initiatives to reform 'native policy', Instead, he appointed the Native Laws (Fagan) Commission that was tasked with the systematisation of the myriad laws pertaining to the administration of Africans. This was to include a review of influx controls. In the interim, the government quietly reinstated the pass laws.[13]

Although the practice of referring matters to commissions to provide guidelines for government policy had been borne of a wish to remove 'native affairs' from the political arena, it often served as a strategy for deferring decision-making on pressing issues. Smuts employed this stalling tactic as he was reluctant to confront the 'urban

13 There is some difference of opinion as to when the pass laws were re-enforced. Hindson (1987:56) is vague and suggests 'after 1945'. Davenport (2005:198) notes that their suspension was lifted during 1943. Shear (2013:227) refers to a communication from the Secretary for Justice to the Police Commissioner dated 14 March 1946 that states that the MNA Van der Byl had authorised the reinstatement of the pass laws.

crisis' head on in the post-war years. The Fagan Commission concluded that the trend towards urbanisation was irreversible and could only be regulated and guided (Lewsen, 1987:112). The Commission's proposals included a Union-wide system of labour bureaux where workers with service contracts might be registered. But it equivocated with respect to passes. It recommended that passes should be retained as a control device, but that those with secure employment should be entitled to substitute passes for identity cards (Davenport, 1991:312). These recommendations suggest that the UP was willing to revamp influx control measures but not abandon them altogether. In the event, its recommendations could not be implemented because of the defeat of UP at the polls in 1948. Meanwhile, the National Party opposition advocated a return to 'hardline' segregation or 'Stallardism'. It had appointed its own Sauer Commission to make recommendations that were to inform its policy of apartheid.

The Practice of Segregation: The Working of Influx Control for Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, 1939-48

The lack of uniformity in urban African administration stemmed from enabling legislation in respect of urban Africans and the well-established historical practices of local authorities. Although there was a large degree of consensus between municipal officials and the NAD, there were areas of conflict between certain municipalities and the NAD over aspects of policy towards urban Africans (Humphries, 1983:66, 69-70). These tensions were exacerbated by administrative obstacles and bureaucratic inertia. This will be illustrated by means of a case study of strategies employed by the local authorities in Cape Town (the 'Mother City') and Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha) for dealing with the influx of Africans prior to and during Smuts's second term as Prime Minister of the Union.

The Cape Province's two main urban centres developed their own locally specific strategies for controlling the movement of Africans. The Mother City had a more transient

African population than did the 'Detroit of the Union' (Baines, 2002).[14] Cape Town practised a form of Coloured Labour Preference (CLP) which afforded unskilled coloured workers preferential access to the labour market ahead of their African counterparts. CLP was applied during times of labour surplus or when it suited employers' needs (Kinkead-Weekes, 1992:563-6). But Cape Town did not enforce a system of pass controls for African workers. Port Elizabeth had devised its own form of urban control which Robinson has termed its 'location strategy'. Its main features included the issue of registration cards with which to control the entry of inhabitants into New Brighton township. This afforded the Location Superintendent the means to control ingress, so long as alternative areas of urban residence were eliminated (Robinson, 1996:124-5, 136-7). These strategies became increasingly ineffectual on account of the rapid growth of the urban populace from the 1930s and the consequent shortage of accommodation for African work-seekers.

Both Cape Town and Port Elizabeth prided themselves on their 'liberal' reputations which stemmed from the absence of pass laws. But in the face of pressures from white ratepayers and law enforcement authorities, the Port Elizabeth municipality devised other types of influx controls. The PE City Council (PECC) maintained that this was on account of the city's specific labour requirements for the manufacturing sector, the institutional interests of the local authority, the costs of introducing the system, and the possibility of resistance thereto (Baines, 2004). Pragmatic rather than principled objections to passes by liberal Councillors who dominated the Native Affairs Committee (NAC) and held the balance of power on the PECC meant that it stopped short of the introduction of passes in Port Elizabeth. Similar constraints seem to have been operative in Cape Town but here the NAC was conservative and favoured strict influx control measures,

14 Port Elizabeth was known as such on account of the establishment of motor vehicle construction plants by Ford and General Motors in the 1920s. See Baines (2002:11).

whereas full meetings of the Cape Town City Council (CTCC) invariably rejected them (Kinkead-Weekes, 1992).

As we have seen, the 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act enabled the government to issue proclamations restricting the entry of Africans into specified urban areas and for the NAD to assume responsibility for and receive revenue accruing from the registration of contracts. Proclamation 210 of 1938 obliged African work-seekers entering the urban area of Port Elizabeth to obtain work or residence permits (*Government Gazette*, Proclamation No. 210, 30 Sept. 1938).[15] Previously, the PECC had been adamant that it would not exercise its prerogative to register Africans entering the city. Certain councillors opposed measures which might jeopardise the labour requirements of the local manufacturing sector and occasion African resistance. Such fears were exacerbated by recent episodes of opposition to the imposition of passes in both Grahamstown and East London. Subsequently, the UP government issued Proclamation 105 of 1939 which stipulated that any African entering the Cape Town urban area without a firm offer of employment could be prosecuted if they failed to heed a three-day warning to return to their place of origin. After some stalling, the CTCC felt itself compelled to implement a system of Native Service Contracts in order to manage and finance this 'soft' form of influx control (*Cape Times*, 6 May 1939, 'City Council May Act 'as Ordered'').

During the war, industrial and infrastructural expansion in Cape Town greatly increased the demand for unskilled African labour. Local employers repeatedly stressed that influx control should not be so stringent as to reduce the local reservoir of unskilled labour. In any event, there were many loopholes in the service contract system which enabled non-registered Africans to circumvent the regulations (Kinkead-Weekes, 1992:83-4). In his April 1941 report on Natives in the Cape Peninsula, an Inspector of Urban Locations, P.G. Cauldwell, noted that 'the Native now forms part of the

15 *Government Gazette*, Proclamation No. 210 of 30 Sept. 1938. Port Elizabeth was listed in a Schedule attached thereto.

economic life of the community and he [sic] has come to stay'. Although the majority of work-seekers were male migrants, there was a growing number of extended households and settled families in the townships of Langa and Ndabeni. He recommended the repatriation of those who failed to obey instructions to leave the prescribed area within three days in contravention of Proclamation 105. However, the reluctance of magistrates to enforce this recommendation, resulted in the transfer of jurisdiction over contraventions of Proclamation 105 from the Justice Department to the NAD. Despite the misgivings of S.N.A. Smit, criminal jurisdiction over influx control offenders was duly conferred on the Additional Native Commissioner in June 1941 (Kinkead-Weekes, 1992:84-5).

Notwithstanding the irregular implementation of the system in the Cape Peninsula, a shortage of labour in August 1941 caused the authorities to relax influx control measures. This preceded the national directive of March 1942 which announced the suspension of the pass laws in the major urban centres. Neither Cape Town nor Port Elizabeth were amongst the cities listed in the schedule to this directive (Hindson, 1987:56). The NAD instructed the authorities that the pass laws were not to be enforced unless a more serious contravention of the law (i.e. criminal offence) was suspected. Whilst the efflux provisions of the 1937 Act were to be temporarily ignored, no statutory change in the pass laws was affected. Smit's urging of leniency towards pass offenders solved neither urban overcrowding nor the problem of the shortage of farm labour (Bell, 1978:22). Restrictions were reimposed in Cape Town within a matter of months, but Proclamation 105 remained in abeyance until mid-1943.

With industrialists, private employers and even government departments preferring African labour, complaints were heard that coloured people had been deprived of work opportunities in the Cape Peninsula. The 1943 report of the Britten Committee of Inquiry into Conditions Existing on the Cape Flats rejected the principle of CLP and predicted that future industrialisation would absorb all African labour in the area provided that it was subjected to 'planned distributive

control' (Kinkead-Weekes, 1992:89). This appeared to imply the city could cope with the ingress of work-seeking Africans if provision was made for their residence in separately demarcated areas. An Inspector of Urban Locations, C.W. Slarke, dismissed the Britten Report's position on CLP. His own Report of April 1943 noted the inadequate provision for the growing number of African workers and their appalling living conditions. But Slarke agreed with his predecessor Cauldwell that 'the native has come to stay' and anticipated an increasing demand for African labour in the Peninsula. Slarke recommended that the City Council's successful system of registration of service contracts be extended to the whole of the Cape Peninsula as 'the best and most immediate means of controlling influx'. This would necessitate the establishment of a labour bureau which would effectively regulate the supply of labour in accordance with employer demand (Kinkead-Weekes, 1992:92-3).

As the labour needs of the industrial sector during the war changed, representations from urban centres to the NAD to tighten the strictures on the movement of Africans grew apace. When local authorities were informed that they would have to bear some of the costs of erecting a depot where service contracts could be administered (Kinkead-Weekes, 1992:94-6), many municipalities baulked at having to do so. For instance, the PECC wanted central government to accept responsibility for implementing such a system. However, the NAD was itself not only short staffed due to the numbers of civil servants who volunteered for military service, but its own budget constraints meant that it, too, wanted to reduce expenditure (Bell, 1978:113). Accordingly, it wanted to pass on the administrative costs to the local authorities who could ill afford these.

In 1943, a committee under the chairmanship of S.H. Elliott, Chief Magistrate of Johannesburg, was appointed to investigate crime on the Witwatersrand and in Pretoria. The commission's mandate was to establish whether there was a connection between increasing levels of crime and the relaxation of the pass laws. It recommended a return to the

pass laws not because it could demonstrate a causal connection between the existence of a reservoir of unskilled African labour and the increase in crime but because it was able to show that the suspension of passes had led to fewer Africans registering for work upon arrival in municipalities, which threatened to undermine the policy of influx control itself (Bell, 1978:91). However, the experience of local authorities in the Transvaal did not necessarily reflect that of their counterparts in the Cape Province.

In Port Elizabeth, certain councillors believed the implementation of pass laws exacted too high a political price. During a PECC debate on the issue of registration, Councillor Young commented that 'if Natives rebelled against measures like registration they could not be blamed'. Liberal councillors asserted that there was a shortage of African labour in the city, and thus no need for any controls on influx. One or two more cautionary notes were sounded but appeals to 'undying principles' and a commitment to giving Africans 'a square deal' carried the day (*Eastern Province Herald*, 1 Feb. 1946). Robinson (1996:154) remarks that 'on the whole the debate was a self-congratulatory reflection on the council's beneficence'. Thus the institutional interests of the council were accorded priority and it again rejected implementing a system of registration early in 1946 (Intermediate Archives Depot (IAD), Port Elizabeth, 25/279 No. 1, Minutes of the Native Affairs Committee, 11 Sept. and 4 Dec. 1945; Minutes of the PECC, 27 Sept. 1945 and 31 Jan. 1946). In spite of the growing chorus that included ratepayers' associations, the South African Police and senior municipal officials such as the newly appointed Manager of Native Affairs, the PECC was not compelled by the UP government to insist on work permits nor to introduce service contracts for its African population.

Local authorities in the Cape Peninsula, on the other hand, were becoming more insistent that steps be taken to control the influx of Africans into the region occasioned by the famine in the Reserves. With the backing of ratepayer's associations, as well as the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, they pressed for more measures to close loopholes in

the service contract registration system. In late 1945 the CTCC approved the extension of the registration regulations to the whole Peninsula, and this was promulgated by Proclamation 74 of 1946. A temporary reception depot was erected in Langa, but it proved impossible to enforce control at the point of entry. Accordingly, the provisions of War Measure 81 of 1943 were applied to restrict the sale of train tickets to Cape Town to Africans from the Cape Eastern districts. This measure was supplemented by strict policing of the service contract system by which 'illegals' could be ordered to leave the proclaimed area within three days or face prosecution. Then from the beginning of 1947, the issue of service contracts was made conditional on prospective employers guaranteeing to repatriate their African labourers to the 'Native Territories' on expiry of their contracts. Eventually, the War Measure was repealed but replaced by permanent legislation which had much the same effect (Kinkead-Weekes, 1992:97-109).

The glaring gap between policy and practice had exposed the failures of influx control and raised questions as to its long-term viability. For their effectiveness depended on a scale of administrative intervention beyond the existing capacities of both central state and local authorities (Bonner, Delius & Posel, 1993:5, 26-7). Contradictory statements by politicians and officials further confused the situation and jeopardised the ability of the NAD to secure the co-operation of urban local authorities during the early 1940s. But so, too, did the actions of the SNA. For instance, when Smit felt that the municipalities needed to be brought into line with Urban Areas legislation, as was the case with influx control measures in 1937, he acted to ensure something was done. But when he decided that the pass laws were becoming a burden on the NAD, he instructed them to ease up on their enforcement (Bell, 1978:91). The inconsistencies in the directives of the SNA made the task of ensuring conformity to national policy by local authorities difficult even for those municipalities that had wished to do so. But others like Cape Town and Port Elizabeth pursued their own agendas and alternative practices. Consequently, parliamentary opposition calls for the

systemisation of pass laws grow apace while African resistance to their (re-)imposition also gathered momentum.

Rapid urbanisation during the war and the post-war years threw into sharp relief the problems attendant on the fact that authorities were unable to regulate the movement of Africans to the cities. Indeed, the number of black people surpassed that of white people in urban areas during this period (Haines, 1991:451-2). This seemed to confirm Smuts's admission that segregation had failed and that white fears of being 'swamped' were being realised. Hence the pass laws were reinstated. The suspension thereof by the UP government proved to be a short-lived experiment. The NP government, too, found it difficult if not impossible to reverse the process of urbanisation. It was only with the consolidation of political power and the systematisation of the repressive functions of the police services that influx control - and its concomitant, social engineering - could be effectively undertaken (Posel, 1991:119). The NP government showed itself less prepared than its predecessor to make concessions to meet particular local needs, and more determined to achieve a greater measure of centralisation and standardisation in urban policy. The central state became increasingly interventionist and undermined local autonomy as it enforced a more rigid form of socio-spatial separation and racial discrimination. Unlike the UP government, the NP sought to iron out any inconsistencies in policy and enforce uniform practices throughout the Union.

Conclusion

Smuts had a vision for the post-war global order in which South Africa had its place (Hyslop, 2012), but he sorely lacked one with respect to the country's 'native question'. He gave mixed signals. On the one hand, Smuts spoke of the need to reform policy when addressing liberal audiences but, on the other, confirmed the UP's commitment to the tenets of segregation before more conservative white voters. Liberals who chose to view the social welfare reforms as presaging a substantial policy shift by the government that offered a

window of opportunity to bring about a change of direction in 'native policy' had their hopes dashed. And critics pointed out the inconsistencies between Smuts's pronouncements on human rights made in international fora and those he made about 'native policy' to domestic audiences. Smuts's equivocation provided Malan's NP with ammunition to criticise the government for having no long-term solution to the 'native problem'. For there was undoubtedly substance to accusations from opposition benches that Smuts had taken 'the line of least resistance' (Bell, 1978:154); that he failed to grasp the nettle. But he was not stung into action by such charges. As was the case with his first term as premier (1919-24), Smuts appeared to lack the political will to chart a new direction in 'native policy' before the issue became critical to his political future. His prevarication was a perennial failing and proved to be politically fatal.

In the 1948 Election, the NP made a point of campaigning for racial separation - or what became known as apartheid. Its platform included a commitment to turning back the tide of Africans in the cities and hence it adopted a hardline stance on urban segregation. For his part, Smuts decided that the final evolution of 'native policy' should be delayed until after the election, which he confidently expected to win (Rich, 1987:110). However, the UP was organisationally moribund, complacent, and conducted a lacklustre electoral campaign. Smuts still believed that he could rely on the loyalty of the *bloedsappe*[16] in the country's weighted rural constituencies,[17] but he was sadly mistaken. He underestimated the disaffection of white workers whose numbers were swelled by an influx of *bywoners* (sharecroppers) and agricultural workers from the *platteland* (rural areas). Newly urbanised 'poor white' Afrikaans-

16 *Bloedsappe* can be loosely translated as born and bred South African Party supporters. The Afrikaans term implies that the SAP was literally in the blood or was hereditary. The United Party was created when the rump of Hertzog's National Party 'fused' with Smuts's followers in the SAP.

17 Smuts turned down calls to appoint a delimitation commission to redraw constituency boundaries that effectively gave greater weight to rural than to urban votes.

speakers were mobilised by cultural and welfare organisations aligned with the NP. The propagation of an ethnic Afrikaner nationalism during the Voortrekker Centenary celebrations had galvanised Malan's supporters (Grundlingh, 2020). The deferred victory parade during the 1947 Royal Tour was not enough to satisfy the grievances of demobilised and socially dislocated ex-servicemen. The King's and Queen's charm offensive to court Afrikaner Nationalists was not successful even though some NP politicians and officials seized the opportunity to hobnob with royalty (Viney, 2018:27, 216). The NP downplayed its republicanism, and even its dalliance with Nazism did little harm at the hustings. Although the NP did not win the popular vote, with the backing of Havenga's Afrikaner Party, it won sufficient marginal constituencies to ensure a narrow electoral victory.

Smuts had ignored prescient warnings of imminent electoral defeat. One such warning was dramatised in the form of a futuristic scenario by historian Arthur Keppel-Jones. Written some eighteen months before the Nationalist victory at the polls, *When Smuts Goes* (1947) predicted that an election victory for the NP would ultimately result in South Africa returning to 'barbarism'; that the cities would become sites of confrontation between white and black people that would put the very foundations of civilisation on trial (Dubow, 2005:10; Bickford-Smith, 2016:197, 216). This stark scenario was a portent of things to come as the policies of an NP government would ratchet up racial frictions that would culminate in a conflagration. In Keppel-Jones's dystopian view, Smuts was depicted as a putative saviour rather than a flawed, mortal politician. Clearly, such faith in Smuts was unjustified, for his hubris was his undoing.

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9. Jan Smuts, Alfred Xuma, and the Struggle for Racial Equality in South Africa, 1939-1948

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Introduction

This chapter discusses the approach followed by Jan Smuts to address the 'Native problem' during his second premiership from 1939 to 1948. Rather than deal with the central issue of granting political rights to Africans, Smuts chose to improve social welfare services for Africans. This approach received criticism from the African Nationalist movement under Alfred Xuma, which insisted on full citizenship rights for all South Africans. The assertive approach adopted by Xuma and other moderate leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) reflected the changing political sentiment inside the African Nationalist movement itself, brought about by an increasingly restive urban African working class, as well as the emergence of the Congress Youth League (CYL). Although it took almost five decades before the cause for racial equality was won, its seeds were planted in the 1940s during Smuts's second premiership. Smuts's steadfast refusal to take initial steps towards racial justice for black people remains a major blot in his outstanding career in public life.

When Jan Christiaan Smuts, the Prime Minister of South Africa from 1919 to 1924 and again from 1939 to 1948, encountered Alfred Xuma, the sixth President-General of the African National Congress (ANC), at the United Nations General Assembly meeting taking place in New York in 1946, he is reported to have asked 'Xuma, are you here? What are you doing here?' In reply, Xuma said 'I have had to fly 10,000 miles to meet my Prime Minister. He talks about us but won't

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talk to us.'[1] Their brief and unplanned encounter in New York appears to have been the first and only meeting they ever had.[2] Smuts's reluctance to meet with leaders of black people appears not to have been limited to Xuma. A survey of the voluminous literature on Smuts's long public career suggests that he did not have much time to talk directly with leaders of the African Nationalist movement.[3] To repeat the perceptive words of Xuma, Smuts talked about black people to many of his interlocutors but was persistently reluctant to talk to them.

I have started this chapter by recounting the encounter between Xuma and Smuts because of its significance as well as for the broader moment it signified. Xuma's decision to travel to New York to challenge the policies of the South African government before the United Nations while the premier, Smuts, was also at the UN promoting his government's policies was unprecedented. For far too long, leaders of the ANC, in particular, tended to adopt an obsequious approach in their relationship with the government. Xuma's assertive approach was a departure from this established tradition. It reflected, I suggest, the fundamental changes inside the broad African Nationalist movement as well as the increasingly tense political situation in South Africa over the political status of Africans. That the confrontation over the problem of the colour line happened during the second Smuts premiership, on the surface appears confusing because evidence suggests that Smuts's approach to the issue, as I will show, had softened. Part of the explanation for the hardening of attitudes on the part of the leadership of the African Nationalist movement can be traced to the enactment of the so-called Hertzog Native Bills in 1936, and the role that Smuts played in it. It is important therefore, to discuss, briefly, the political confrontation over

1 The exchange is contained in Steven D. Gish's biography of Alfred B. Xuma. (Gish, 2000:148).

2 Gish, 2000:148.

3 The exception appears to have been D.D.T. Jabavu with whom Smuts is reported to have enjoyed some relationship. Hancock (1968:265) describes their relationship as 'easy and friendly'.

the Hertzog Native Bills and to examine in particular Smuts's role as well as the opposition mounted by Africans.

Smuts, Xuma and the Hertzog Native Bills

In April 1936, the parliament of South Africa voted to approve the so-called Hertzog's Native Bills. Of the members of parliament who voted, 169 voted in favour of the two bills while only 11 voted against (Paton, 1964:231).[4] Amongst the 169 members who voted in favour of the Native Bills were Jan Smuts, the former Prime Minister and, at that time, deputy to Hertzog in the Fusion government they had established in 1933. Amongst the 11 who voted against the bills was Jan Hofmeyr, Smuts's protégé and a minister in the Hertzog cabinet. Paton (1964:231) notes that when the voting count was announced, it was met with cheering by members of parliament. This was in acknowledgement, he states, of 'Hertzog's achievement and the crowning of his life's work'.

There is truth in Paton's observation that the passing of the two bills was fulfilment of the ambition that Hertzog had had for a while. Indeed, Hertzog first introduced the so-called Native Bills a decade earlier in 1926. The bills sought to address two issues that were central to Hertzog's policy towards black people. The first issue concerned the political status and rights of black people. The second matter concerned the land question. About the first issue, Hertzog's main goal was to remove Africans from the Cape common voters' roll. In the case of the issue of land, one of the bills proposed to make available some hectares of land for settlement by black people in line with one of the recommendations of the commission of enquiry chaired by William Beaumont in the aftermath of the Natives Land Act of 1913 (see, for instance, Limb, 2010:186; Walshe, 1970:55-57). For a decade, Hertzog was unable to have the bills passed by parliament because of the two-thirds

4 Smuts's biographer, Hancock, (1968:266) gives a slightly different number of those who voted in favour of the two bills. According to him, 168 members of parliament voted in favour of the bills rather than the 169 mentioned by Paton.

majority that was required to interfere with the franchise rights of Cape Africans who were eligible to vote. It was only after the formation of the Fusion government[5] in 1933 that there was a possibility for the enactment of a law that would have removed eligible Cape Africans from the common voters' roll. For Hertzog, Paton (1964:198) claims, the very idea of forming a coalition government with Smuts was so that the ''native problem' could be settled once and for all'.

Of the two Native Bills that were passed in April 1936, the Representation of Natives Bill was the most contentious. As already mentioned, Hertzog's main goal through the bill was the total removal of Cape Africans from the common voters' roll. This policy proposal had been opposed by Smuts and organisations representing African political rights from the beginning when Hertzog introduced it in 1926. Hertzog had sought to have the removal of Cape Africans from the common voters' roll a condition for the coalition government during his negotiations with Smuts in 1933 (Hancock, 1968). Although Smuts rejected Hertzog's proposal, article 6 of the coalition agreement committed the two leaders and their parties to make an 'earnest effort' to find a solution to the so-called 'Native problem' (Hancock, 1968:251).

Hertzog followed through on the commitment to make an earnest effort by putting forward two revised bills to address the issue of the franchise for Africans as well as addressing the land issue. Hertzog's efforts had gained considerable momentum by late 1934 and early 1935, so much so that in his letter to Margaret Gillett, a friend from his days as a student at Oxford, Smuts wrote the following:

5 The Fusion government was a coalition government of the Nationalist Party led by Hertzog and the South African Party led by Smuts. According to the agreement, Hertzog became the Prime Minister while Smuts was offered the position of Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice. The coalition government was followed by the fusion of the two parties. The new party was called the United Party. See Hancock (1968) and Paton (1964) for an extensive discussion of the circumstances between the formation of the Fusion government.

> Here we are again busy with the Native bills. It is clear that I am going to be beaten and Hertzog will get his two-thirds majority in spite of my opposition. Many of my stalwarts are beginning to think that the mixed franchise will lead the Natives nowhere. The Native voters at the Cape have actually dwindled to about 10,000. As a constructive advance I have suggested a Native council or assembly for South Africa on the Bunga type to which Natives will be elected or nominated, and which will deliberate on all matters of Native interest and advise parliament. This may become a body of real importance as a platform for intelligent Native opinion and give Natives that voice in their own affairs which it will be impossible for parliament to ignore. This, with a land bill and improved educational and health facilities, may make a real advance. Personally I shall have to stand by the Native franchise at the Cape and cannot compromise on that issue. But public opinion is growing the other way, even among really enlightened people like Duncan and others. We are now discussing my new proposals to which Hertzog has agreed but which many of his friends don't like.[6]

Smuts's promise in the letter to 'stand by the Native franchise at the Cape' and to not compromise on the issue was not to last long. His change of heart, if it were to be called that, was evident in an April letter to Margaret Gillett.[7] Smuts stated that he saw the revised draft Bills as 'great advances'. According to him, the Native Trust and Land Bill gave Africans 'considerable additional land'[8], and the provisions in the Representation of Natives Bill, which included the representation of Africans in the senate by white representatives as well as the establishment of the Natives Representative Council as replacement of the Cape African franchise was also acceptable

6 Letter from Smuts to M.C. Gillett dated 23 February 1935, vol. 53, no. 194. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:11–12).

7 Letter from Smuts to M.C. Gillett dated 28 April 1935, vol. 53, no. 204. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:18).

8 Smuts's letter to M.C. Gillett dated 28 April 1935, vol. 53, no. 204. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:18).

to Smuts. He did concede that Africans would not be pleased by a Bill that took away their franchise rights, and also claimed that he would not have taken the Cape African franchise away had he had the power. In his opinion, what the so-called Native Bills offered Africans would in the long run prove useful to them. Smuts justified his volte-face on the issue of the Cape African franchise by arguing that 'white opinion is firmly opposed to the continuance of the Native franchise'.[9]

Smuts's decision to support a bill that removed Cape African voters from the common roll was particularly controversial. Amongst those who opposed the measure was Hofmeyr. Hofmeyr outlined several reasons for opposing the Bill that removed the Cape Africans from the roll. One of them was that the 1936 Bill was worse than what Hertzog had proposed in 1926 and 1929 respectively. Although Hofmeyr did not spell it out, Smuts had opposed both the 1926 and 1929 versions of the Bill, which, as he pointed out, were a lot more liberal than the 1936 version that Smuts supported. Hofmeyr also objected to the heart of the 1936 Bill, which was the removal of Cape Africans from the common roll and the introduction of the communal representation scheme. He regarded such a scheme, Paton (1964:227) notes, as 'dangerous.'

Hofmeyr was not alone in opposing the 1936 Hertzog Native Bills. He was joined by 10 other members of parliament who voted against it. There was also strong opposition from the African Nationalist camp. As a matter of fact, this opposition was long-standing; it had started when Hertzog introduced the Bills in 1926. Then, as in 1926, the opposition of the African Nationalist movement led organisationally by the African National Congress (ANC) was 'immediate and decisive' (Walshe, 1970:113). African Nationalists rejected the Land Bill on the basis that it was anchored on the 1913 Natives Land Act and its allocation of land, which they considered to be unjust to Africans. In addition, they objected to the Representation

9 Smuts's letter to M.C. Gillett dated 28 April 1935, vol. 53, no. 204. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:18).

of Natives Bill on the basis that it did not recognise the rights of Africans to participate in the affairs of the country as equal citizens (Walshe, 1970; Ngqulunga, 2017). Leaders of various groups representing Africans were particularly affronted by the proposal to do away with the Cape franchise. They also called for the repeal of the 1913 Natives Land Act, which was the cornerstone of the Native Trust and Land Bill (Walshe, 1970:113).

The reintroduction of the Hertzog Native Bills (in amended form) in 1935 provoked strong opposition from the African Nationalist movement. Walshe (1970:119) observes that it also coalesced this opposition around the All-African Convention (AAC), which had been formed in December 1935 under the leadership of Professor D.D.T. Jabavu as its president and Xuma as Vice President. Indeed, both Jabavu and Xuma - 'two men of outstanding stature' (Walshe, 1970:115) - had by 1935 become the leading opponents of the Hertzog Bills. The main reason for the emergence of the AAC and for the prominent role played by Jabavu and Xuma was the enfeeblement of the ANC in the 1930s under the leadership of Pixley ka Isaka Seme (Ngqulunga, 2017). Jabavu, Xuma and other leaders of the AAC anchored their objections to the Native Bills on their fundamental faith in the Cape liberal tradition, which promised - and indeed offered - individual franchise to all 'civilised' men (Walshe, 1970; Gish, 2000). Their reaction to the presentation of the revised Bills in 1935 was to insist on the preservation of the individual Cape African franchise and to call for more land to be given to black people. So strongly did Xuma believe in the preservation of the Cape franchise that when Hertzog offered a compromise of putting Cape Africans on a separate roll and allowing them to elect three white representatives to the House of Assembly, he, according to his biographer, Stephen Gish (2000:87), 'became alarmed'. 'To his mind the principle of a common franchise - so integral to the Cape liberal tradition - could not be forsaken' (Gish, 2000:87). Xuma joined other leaders of the AAC who were in Cape Town meeting Hertzog 'determined to persuade

his colleagues to repudiate Hertzog's proposal', which they did (Gish, 2000:87).

Although Xuma and the AAC's opposition to the Hertzog's Native Bills failed with their approval by parliament in April 1936, his participation in opposing them [the Bills] 'had catapulted him into the front ranks of African political leadership (Gish, 2000:88). Gish makes a telling observation, which is that Xuma came out of the opposition to the Bills quite sceptical of the sincerity of white politicians whom he believed 'merely gave lip service to racial reconciliation' (Gish, 2000:88). As a result, he came to believe that independent political organisation was critical to advancing the interests of Africans. Based on this belief and his loss of faith in participating in government institutions, Xuma rebuffed entreaties to participate in the Native Representative Council (NRC) (Gish, 2000:89). This set a tone for how he approached his leadership of the ANC when he became its President-General in 1940. Crucially, his belief in independent African organisation and his loss of faith in government institutions such as the NRC influenced his approach to his interaction with the Smuts government over the rights of Africans during the 1940s. It did not help matters that Smuts anchored his government's policy towards Africans on the pillars laid by Hertzog in the 1930s (Davenport, 1975).

Outline of the Smuts Government's Policy towards Africans: 1939-1948

Smuts assumed the premiership of South Africa for the second time under the shadows of World War II. Indeed, all the voluminous literature on Smuts indicates that South Africa's participation in the war became Smuts's primary concern during the first few years of his second premiership (see, for instance, Hancock, 1968). Although the political status of Africans attracted public prominence from time to time, as was the case leading up to the 1943 general elections for instance, it was only in the aftermath of the war that the South African government's policies and treatment of non-white races,

especially people of Indian descent, received critical attention at international forums such as the United Nations (Dubow, 2008; Hancock, 1968). In the absence of any focused attention to the 'Native problem', Smuts leaned on the policy framework set by Hertzog with the enactment of his Native Bills in 1936. As Davenport suggests (1975:80), Hertzog's policy framework was anchored on three major pillars. These were the territorial segregation between black and white people, with Africans largely confined to the reserves; communal and indirect representation of Africans in parliament with Cape African voters consigned to a separate voters' roll; and the segregation of urban Africans to ensure that there was a limitation to the number of Africans allowed to move to the urban areas.

As I have mentioned already, Smuts had supported the thrust of this policy position when Hertzog presented it to House of Assembly in April 1936. His reasoning for doing so was that it was a much better deal for Africans, especially considering that the Representation of Natives Act enabled the establishment of the NRC, an advisory and consultative statutory body through which it was envisaged that Africans would advise government on matters that affected them. In fact, Hancock (1968:482) notes, Smuts had hoped that the NRC would develop into a 'legislative body on the national scale' for Africans. That ambition did not materialise. If anything, the NRC became an ineffective and toothless 'talking shop' (Hancock, 1968:482). Crucially, the policy framework that Smuts inherited from Hertzog and sought to implement, came under tremendous threat and challenge from the very beginning of his second premiership. In fact, the social and economic sands were shifting underneath it even as Hertzog was trying to entrench its key pillars in the mid-1930s (Davenport, 1975:81). For instance, the policy goal to limit the movement of Africans to the urban centres was undermined by rapid economic growth in the 1930s, which followed the devaluation of the pound in December 1932 (Davenport, 1975). This, in turn, led to strong demand for labour, which led to significant numbers of Africans moving to urban areas to meet the demand, at times being employed in skilled jobs reserved

for white people in terms of the 'civilised' labour policy. The outbreak of World War II and South Africa's participation on the side of the Britain and its allies further attracted an influx of Africans into cities and towns to meet the demands of the war economy. Between 1936 and 1946, the African population in Johannesburg, for instance, increased by a staggering 68% (Davenport, 1975:85). The presence of such a large number of Africans in cities such as Johannesburg created its own problems. For instance, there emerged a squatter movement from the mid-1940s, which had a direct correlation to the inadequacy of housing for Africans living in urban centres. To compound matters, the low wages paid to Africans and high cost of living in urban centres led to the eruption of labour strikes. Writing to his friend, Margaret Gillett in January 1943, Smuts acknowledged as much that Africans in urban centres faced depressed economic and social conditions. He wrote:

> We are having a very difficult time with the Natives who are getting infected with the virus of change and unrest and have moreover fallen into the hands of our Communists. Strikes are once more becoming common, and some regrettable shooting incidents have taken place. Of course the Natives are not without a case. They are dreadfully underpaid and feel the economic stress very severely in the towns. I have urged our Wage Board to accelerate the determination of higher minimum wages for unskilled workers, but the needs and demands are outpacing these reforms. Hence the unrest, and the outbursts. This morning I saw a very influential deputation of the churches who urged me to hurry on the good work, and the necessary reforms in social and political conditions. This is easier urged than done, and the proximity of the election makes the situation still more awkward. I am going to do whatever is politically possible and may even exceed the limits of political expediency. But I dare not do anything which will outpace public opinion too much just on the eve of an

> election which may be the most important ever held in this country.[10]

Smuts had already outlined his government's main approach to the so-called 'Native problem' a year before this correspondence with Margaret Gillett. In an address to the South African Institute of Race Relations delivered in January 1942 in Cape Town, he made a startling admission that the policy of segregating black and white South Africans, which was the bedrock of the Hertzog's Native Bills and his own, had failed dismally. For Smuts, it was not a belief in the superiority of white people that was at issue. Rather, he implored his audience to '[L]eave alone the question of higher race and lower race'. In its place, he proposed what he termed a relationship of trusteeship between black and white people (Smuts, 1942 in van Der Poel, 1973a:338). The central obligation - indeed duty - of white people was to 'discharge our trusteeship' (van der Poel, 1973a:339). Smuts proposed various ways in which white people as trustees could discharge this duty. In the main, these involved taking practical steps to improve the social and economic conditions of Africans. For instance, he pointed to the field of education for black people and argued that white people could do more to improve the situation. This was followed by health. In this case too, he contended that a lot more needed to be done to improve the health status of black people. He then tackled the issue of wages and the general living conditions of Africans especially those who resided in the urban centres of the country. In this respect, he argued: 'Leaving aside, tonight, the rural areas, the farms, and looking merely at the position in the big towns, all the evidence goes to show that, in general, the African cannot support his family in most places on the wage he is getting.'[11] 'The idea of trusteeship' Smuts argued, 'carries heavy implications and very serious duties'. As trustees, white people

10 Smuts's letter to M.C. Gillett dated 13 January 1943, vol.72, no. 198. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:407-408).

11 Smuts's address to the South African Institute of Race Relations on 21 January 1942 in Cape Town. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:341).

'have to look after the health and housing conditions, not only of our European, but also of our African, wards'. Continuing on this theme, he implored white people that they, as trustees, shall have to do this duty.[12]

Following on this speech, Hancock (1968:480-481) observes that the Smuts government took practical steps to improve the social and economic conditions of Africans. He points out the government's budgets of 1945 and 1946, which he states extended social security benefits to Africans although at lower levels as compared to white people. Hancock (1968:480-481) also notes that there were substantial improvements in expenditure for the education of Africans, and that a special law was passed in 1945, which made 'Native education' 'wholly a charge upon the central revenue' - a new development at the time. 'In the fields of health and housing' Hancock (1968:481) observes, 'the government steadily stepped up its financial aid to the provincial and municipal authorities', and in the case of wage determination the government 'made the cost-of-living allowances obligatory'.

A look at correspondence that Smuts exchanged with his acquaintances suggests that he believed genuinely that the social and economic lot of Africans needed to be improved. For instance, in a letter to Mary Gillett written in January 1943, Smuts admitted that the protests of Africans over their economic and social conditions were legitimate and he promised to do something about it. He conceded that Africans were 'dreadfully underpaid and feel the economic stress very severely in the towns' (Smuts in Hancock & van der Poel, 1973a:408). The question that confronts us regarding these concessions and attempts at social and economic improvements is whether they addressed in a fundamental way the problems faced by Africans. Were these attempts a proverbial matter of too little, too late? To address this

12 Smuts's address to the South African Institute of Race Relations on 21 January 1942 in Cape Town. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:339).

question, it is important to consider the views and reactions of Africans to Smuts's attempts to address the 'Native' question.

Xuma and the *African Claims*

Smuts's second stint as the Premier of South Africa coincided with the revival of the ANC under the leadership of Xuma. In fact, it is almost impossible to examine the attempts by Smuts to address the 'Native' question without discussing at the same time the presidency of Xuma and the measures he (Xuma) and his colleagues in the African Nationalist movement took to press the political and economic claims of Africans. Xuma's rise to the summit of leadership of the African Nationalist movement was an uncommon one. Unlike his predecessors as President-General, Xuma had not been present at the founding of the ANC in 1912. In fact, he was drawn from another generation altogether, having been born in 1893, for instance, two decades younger than John Dube, the first President-General of the ANC. When he returned to South Africa from the long absence overseas training to become a medical doctor, Xuma shunned serious participation in politics (see Gish, 2000, for an extensive discussion of Xuma's life). It was only Hertzog's Native Bills that drew Xuma into active participation in African Nationalist politics where he rose to become the Vice-President of the All-Africa Convention (AAC) (Gish, 2000:86). Even then, Xuma showed signs that his political approach to pressing the political claims of Africans was slightly different from the older leaders such as D.D.T. Jabavu and Pixley Seme, the leading figures of the African Nationalist movement at the time. For instance, when a representative of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) suggested that the institute and the SAIRR should work together with the AAC to oppose the Hertzog's Native Bills, Xuma, going against his senior colleagues Selby Msimang and Jabavu, turned down the suggestion. As he later wrote about the incident in his incomplete autobiography, he said he considered the approach 'improper as we had no mandate from the Conference to seek alliances on the way' (Xuma in Limb, 2012:38). He would demonstrate a similar

independent and somewhat radical streak when he opposed a proposal by Hertzog for the Cape Africans to give up the franchise in exchange for a separate voters' roll created for them and for indirect representation at the House Assembly by six white representatives. Xuma, as he later recounted the incident in his autobiography, strongly opposed the so-called Hertzog compromise, as it came to be known. He persuaded his colleagues in the AAC to reject it altogether (Xuma in Limb, 2012:38-39).

It was, however, as president-general of the ANC from 1940 to 1949 that Xuma's prominence and esteem rose. As many historians of the ANC (see, for instance, Limb, 2010; Walshe, 1970; Ngqulunga, 2017; Gish, 2000) have noted, Xuma inherited a moribund organisation that had lost political influence and initiative. And yet, as his biographer, Gish (2000:111) notes, Xuma embarked on a vigorous programme of reviving the ANC as soon as he became President-General in 1940. 'Within six months of taking office as ANC president', Gish (2000:111) observes, 'he outlined his vision for Congress'. His vision for his presidency of the ANC was contained in a document published by *Inkululeko* - an official newspaper of the Communist Party of South Africa. Titled *The Policy and Platform of the African National Congress*, the document repeats and emphasises the founding principles of the ANC, especially its central mission of bringing about the unity of Africans. In the section that deals with social and economic rights, Xuma showed his intention to chart a course that was different from his predecessors. About political rights, for instance, Xuma's document boldly called for the right of franchise to Africans, and their representation in the legislative bodies of the country (Karis & Carter, 1973:168-171). Although these political claims appear mild by today's standards, they were extraordinary at the time, especially when read against the Smuts government's insistence on indirect representation of Africans in parliament and the continuation of the Native Representative Council. The part of the document that deals with economic, industrial and economic policies also calls for inclusion and equality of all races. The document also

made significant proposals concerning land, education and employment of Africans in the civil service. Xuma commended these political claims to 'Fellow Africans' and urged them to 'organise, unite, close ranks, work and fight for' (Karis & Carter, 1973:168-171).

Xuma's August 1941 policy statement set the tone for his presidency of the ANC and for his approach to interacting with the Smuts government. His engagement with the government regarding its policies and actions that affected Africans was numerous and vigorous. He wrote letters and memoranda, appeared before government commissions, and sought and met numerous functionaries of the state. In June 1941, for instance, he sent a telegram to Smuts protesting an incident in which police officers 'shot two Africans dead', 'wounded' another, and 'assaulted [a] pregnant woman' (Limb, 2012:76). In March 1942, he led a delegation of ANC leaders to meet with Smuts's deputy, Colonel Deneys Reitz, who was also Minister of Native Affairs. Xuma and his delegation had requested to meet with Smuts, who turned down their request 'owing to the onerous burdens cast upon him by reason of the war' (Karis & Carter, 1973:188).

As President-General, Xuma dispatched numerous memoranda and appeared before various government commissions to advocate the cause of Africans. In September 1943, for example, he submitted a memorandum to the government commission appointed to inquire into the issue of bus services for Africans living in the major centres in the Transvaal. In that memorandum, he represented the interests of residents from Alexandra township outside Johannesburg. In the memorandum, Xuma called for the increase of wages of African workers, and for the bus fare not to be increased. Furthermore, he advocated for the employment of Africans 'on all transport services serving them no matter by whom promoted' (Limb, 2012:195). Xuma's memorandum was followed by the evidence he gave before the Native Mine Wages Commission, which the Smuts government established to inquire into what Limb (2012:209) describes as the 'long-standing grievances of black miners and the formation in 1941

of the African Mine Workers' Union under the leadership of J.B. Marks. True to his position regarding the representation of Africans on matters that affected them, Xuma (see Limb, 2012:210) began his evidence by complaining that Africans were not represented in the commission. He proceeded to attack the exclusion of Africans from skilled jobs and insisted on their right to organise themselves in trade unions. In July 1946, he gave evidence before the government Commission on Penal and Prison Reform held at the Johannesburg Magistrate Court. Here too, he asserted the right of the ANC to appear before the commission because, he argued, it represented the 'majority population' (Limb, 2012:199). Xuma accused the government of passing 'voluminous legislation' 'creating more crimes and offences for 'Natives only' so that 95% of Africans convicted of prison population are in custody for technical offences not crime'. He added that only 'less than 5% of the Africans are tried for serious crimes' (Limb, 2012:199).

Xuma's fundamental challenge to Smuts's so-called Native policy came in the aftermath of Smuts's victory in the 1943 elections. Apparently, Xuma chose the moment of the challenge very carefully. In the early 1940s, Smuts had always explained his reluctance to do more for Africans by pointing to the elections of 1943 as a constraint. This is evident in a January 1943 letter to Margaret Gillett in which he wrote: 'I am going to do whatever is politically possible, and may even exceed the limits of political expediency. But I dare not do anything which will outpace public opinion too much just on the eve of an election which may be the most important ever held in this country.'[13]

Xuma seized the opportunity of Smuts's victory in the 1943 elections by pressing the political claims of Africans. In a congratulatory letter to Smuts, Xuma argued that the victory provided Smuts with a 'last and God-given opportunity of serving your country in a great measure by bringing about freedom and prosperity for the non-European sections who

13 Smuts's letter to M.C. Gillett dated 13 January 1943, vol.72, no. 198. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:407-408).

have sacrificed their all, their lives, in defence of and for the freedom of South Africa' (Xuma quoted in Walshe, 1970:273). Xuma did not end there. He established what he called the Atlantic Charter Committee with him as its chair whose sole mandate was to study the implications of the Atlantic Charter for the African population in South Africa and draft a set of political claims based on the Atlantic Charter (Walshe, 1970:272). The document produced by Xuma's committee came to be known as the *African Claims*. The document challenged the very heart of Smuts's policy towards Africans by insisting that Africans were entitled to fundamental freedoms such as universal adult suffrage and participation in political decision-making as equal citizens. The *African Claims* also rejected the continued existence of the NRC and called for Africans to be represented directly in the legislative bodies of the country such as parliament (Walshe, 1970:275-278).

Xuma dispatched the document to Smuts and described it as 'the accepted expression of the Africans idea of a new world order' (Gish, 2000:128). Xuma then requested a meeting with Smuts to discuss the document and 'the implications of the Atlantic Charter for South Africa' (Gish, 2000:128). Smuts was not pleased by the *African Claims* document and Xuma's demands that he change policy direction with regard to the rights of Africans. Replying through his private secretary, Henry Cooper, Smuts described the *African Claims* document in rather unflattering terms, calling it:

> ... a propagandist document intended to propagate the views of your Congress. As such it is free to you to do your own publicity to secure support for your views. The Prime Minister cannot agree to be drawn into the task by means of an interview with him. He does not agree with your interpretation of the Atlantic Charter and with your effort to stretch its meaning so as to make it apply to all sorts of African problems and conditions. That is an academic affair which does not call for any intervention on his part.[14]

14 This letter from Smuts's private secretary to Xuma is archived in the A.B. Xuma Papers located at the Historical

Smuts went on to chastise Xuma for not acknowledging his government's efforts to improve the social and economic conditions of Africans. His main focus, Smuts argued, was on practical steps to improve the social welfare of Africans. Upon receiving the letter from Smuts, Xuma is reported to have read it to the 1944 ANC annual conference and reconfirmed its commitment to the ideals contained in the *African Claims* document (Walshe, 1970:274).

Smuts's strong reply to Xuma betrayed a certain irritation with the manner in which Xuma used the Atlantic Charter - a document with which he (Smuts) identified - as a stick with which to beat him. Around the same time, Smuts was facing a challenge in the international arena particularly from the Indian delegation at the United Nations over his government's treatment of South Africans of Indian descent (Hancock, 1968). So affected was Smuts by the international opposition to the government's approach to race relations that in a letter to Margaret Gillett he wrote:

> I have told you that the going is very bad here. Violent opposition both on the Indian and South West Africa questions. Colour queers my pitch everywhere. I quite understand and can look at it all philosophically. But South Africans cannot understand. Colour bars are to them part of the divine order of things. But I sometimes wonder what our position in years to come will be when the whole world will be against us. And yet there is so much to be said for the South African point of view who fear getting submerged in black Africa. I can watch the feeling in my own family, which is as good as the purest gold. It is a sound instinct of self-preservation where the self is so good and not mere selfishness.
>
> But of course I am considered a hypocrite, saying nice things and doing such awful things![15]

Papers, University of the Witwatersrand. The extract cited above is taken from Walshe (1970: 74).

15 Smuts's letter to M.C. Gillett dated 17 November 1946, vol.80, no. 223. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:407-408).

At home, his insistence on indirect representation of Africans in parliament faced heavy headwinds. Members of the NRC questioned its relevance and continued existence. This was of course a blow to Smuts who had staked his support for the Hertzog Native Bills in 1936 on the basis that the NRC 'may become a body of real importance as a platform for intelligent Native opinion and give Natives that voice in their own affairs which it will be impossible for parliament to ignore.'[16] By 1946, however, Smuts's hopes came under considerable threat from members of the NRC itself. In one of their meetings held in August 1946, members of the NRC moved for its indefinite adjournment on account of the government's unwillingness and failure to grant political rights to Africans (Matthews, 1986). Z.K. Matthews, one of the leading figures of the NRC, explains the reasoning behind their resolution. He states that the NRC members resolved to adjourn the NRC indefinitely 'until the Government should undertake to abolish discriminatory legislation' (Matthews, 1986:146).

Although the NRC had made this demand in the past, its decision for an indefinite adjournment of the NRC until the demand was met, reflected largely the tense moment in South Africa in the aftermath of World War II. As Matthews (1986:144) observes, there was great expectation by the African community that the aftermath of the war would bring fundamental political changes in the country. The reasoning was that the Smuts government would grant African political rights and treat them fairly owing to the sacrifices they had made during the war. Reflecting on the hopes of the moment, Matthews (1986:144) states 'South Africa was going to become a better place for all concerned, including the African population'. Those hopes were not met. In fact, the Smuts government fired and killed about nine mine workers who had joined the general strike called by the African Mineworkers Union in 1946. In response to the strike, the Smuts government mobilised the police and soldiers to clamp down on striking workers. For his part, Smuts issued a statement in

16 Smuts's letter to M.C. Gillett dated 23 February 1935, vol.53, no. 194. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:375).

which he said he was 'not unduly unperturbed' by the strike (Matthews, 1986:145). Like he did in the aftermath of the Bulhoek massacre in May 1921, he left South Africa to attend a conference overseas, in this case a meeting of the United Nations in New York. According to Matthews (1986:145), it was during that week of the violent suppression of the miners' strike, along with Smuts's statement, that relations between Smuts, the NRC and his government, 'reached breaking point'.

Rather than address substantively the demands of the NRC, Smuts instructed his deputy, Hofmeyr, not to make any concessions to the NRC. He feared that doing so would be considered a 'surrender to Native dictations.' Although conceding that his government's 'Native policy would have to be liberalized', Smuts insisted that his approach remained focused on '[P]ractical social policy away from politics'.[17] Avoiding addressing the political status of black people, as Smuts hoped to do, had become untenable during the 1940s. The world had and was changing. As Smuts himself had acknowledged in his January 1942 address to the SAIRR, old social arrangements were disappearing. More Africans had moved to urban areas, thereby creating a political base that the ANC and other political forces mobilised to press for political reforms. The decolonisation sweeping through the world was bringing voices of opposition to the South African system of racial discrimination. Smuts was not exaggerating when he observed in September 1946 that:

> There is growing widespread opinion adverse to us. South Africans are getting into ill odour, owing to colour bar and wrong Native publicity, and perhaps also owing to our prosperous condition in an impoverished world. I fear our going will not be too good. As Nicholls puts it 'South Africa will be on the spot' at New York. Our difficulties are due partly to our bad propaganda. Even South Africans do nothing but crab us...

17 Smuts's telegram to Hofmeyr dated 28 September 1946, Vol. 80, no. 131. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:375).

> I sense a worsening atmosphere in many directions. Mostly of course the trouble is due to the South African attitude on Native political rights and the difficult structure of our social racial system.[18]

These forces that were pushing Smuts towards the path of political reform were also nudging Xuma towards a more assertive approach to his dealings with Smuts and his government. The formation of the Congress Youth League (CYL) in 1944 and its push for a radical response to the Smuts government's policy towards Africans played an important role in shaping Xuma's ANC's relationship with the Smuts government. Some elements in the CYL were deadly opposed to the continuation of the NRC and campaigned for its abolition. Others argued for the mass mobilisation of an increasingly growing African urban working class to force the government to introduce political and economic reforms (Walshe, 1970). The CYL's campaign against participation in the NRC and its insistence on direct and full representation of Africans in all chambers of government and public affairs pushed Xuma and other moderate leaders such as Z.K. Matthews, for instance, to take an uncompromising line towards the Smuts government. In these circumstances, Smuts's extremely cautious reforms, which focused on improving the social welfare of Africans were a matter of too little, too late.

Conclusion

In 1948 Smuts and his United Party were defeated in an election in which the political rights of Africans occupied centre stage. The Nationalist Party that won the election campaigned on a policy of what it called a*partheid*. Smuts, on the other hand, preached what he called the middle way that he thought South Africa should follow (Hancock, 1968:504). As his biographer, Hancock argued (1968:504), Smuts's middle way 'meant to him what it had meant twenty-one years before when he delivered his Rhodes Memorial Lectures:

18 Smuts's letter to Hofmeyr dated 8 September 1946, Vol. 79, no. 30. In Hancock and van der Poel (1973a:375).

South Africa as a unitary state, within which the weaker races as well as the stronger must have electoral representation'. What Hancock does not mention is that Smuts's version of electoral representation did not include one person, one vote for all South Africans. It meant, rather, the continued exclusion of black people from participation in the political affairs of their country. Although the Nationalist Party would take the political exclusion of black people to the extreme, Smuts's failure to take the first steps towards their inclusion remains a major blot to what is universally considered to be an outstanding career in public life.

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10. Smuts: Afraid of Greatness

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Richard Steyn's recently acclaimed biography (2015), albeit critical and acknowledging Smuts's numerous ambiguities and flaws, presents him as a 'great man' who, respectively, fought for freedom against British Imperialism; established South Africa as a new state; sought to build a united white nation; and played a distinguished role internationally as a military leader and global statesman. Given a current tendency for Smuts to be uncritically dismissed as having laid the foundations for apartheid, Steyn's reassertion of Keith Hancock's presentation of Smuts as both a highly complex figure and one of the most outstanding men of the twentieth century (1962 and 1968) is most welcome. However, this contribution will argue that his characterisation of Smuts as 'Unafraid of Greatness', the subtitle of his book (borrowed from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*),[1] is fundamentally wrong, and that as Prime Minister during the years following World War II, he failed the greatest test that history had put to him.

The argument to be made here does not seek to dispute the significance of Smuts's role in history. Nor will it seek to engage in the debate about whether it is constructive and proper to attribute historical 'greatness' to notable individuals who can be acknowledged as having shaped our past. The position adopted here is that while structural forces have usually been far more significant in shaping historical outcomes than individuals, particular individuals have played a highly influential (at times, even determining) role in particular situations. Furthermore, it is recognised that while we assess the role played by individuals according to our

1 A reminder, if it is needed: '....be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em'.

judgement of how their actions were guided by (or deviated from) the values and beliefs that pervaded the society of their day, the values which we hold today inevitably influence our understanding of the past. This does not mean that we have a completely free hand in how we judge the actions of our subjects of study, as we must continue to be guided by the rules and standards of historical scholarship. However, it does indicate that in making our judgements, we need to make the perspectives and values from which we are approaching our writing of history evident and clear.

Any biographer worthy of the name is going to be aware of the complications these considerations bring to the task of making judgements about the lives of their subjects. They need to counter-balance their awareness that their subjects were 'men or women of their time' with retrospective judgements of the consequences of their actions, and the extent to which they bore responsibility for them (for good or ill). And this of course, brings us back to Smuts, and why - in the view of this writer - the reputation attributed to him for 'greatness' by some biographers (even if they have eschewed that device of language) has in our time become so tarnished.

In brief, it is argued here that the reason why Smuts is so widely criticised, even reviled, today is that, despite his professed liberalism, he was on the wrong side of history regarding the issue of the black vote, despite his long-held realisation that what (in its time) was termed 'the native question' was the most important existential issue confronting South African society. The argument of this chapter is that he consciously and consistently ducked the issue.

There is clearly much retrospection in this judgement. So how do we untangle the argument while recognising the problems posed by relativity of historical judgement referred to above? A short answer is 'with difficulty' because of the contradictions which lay at the heart of his liberalism.

The Liberal and Democrat

In 1943, Alexander Campbell, a left-leaning British journalist then based in South Africa described Smuts as 'One of the greatest democratic leaders in the world today' (Campbell, 1943:45). Writing at the height of World War II, at a time the opposition National Party (NP)[2] was flirting openly with fascism and urging Hitler to victory, this assertion would have been regarded as commonplace amongst many of his readers. It was Smuts who had ensured that South Africa would enter war on the side of Britain in 1939; he was a close confidant of Churchill; and he had long become a great man of the Empire. It was Smuts, if anyone, who would be able to persuade his countrymen to move forward to democracy after the war.

Of course, it was well known internationally that there was a highly developed system of racial segregation in South Africa, more thoroughgoing and more rigorous than anywhere else in the British Empire. Nonetheless, for all that Smuts had been at the heart of governments which had enacted a mass of legislation which buttressed white racial dominance, it would not have been regarded as unduly contrary by his readers when Campbell described Smuts as the man most likely to move South Africa forwards to a more liberal system (Campbell, 1943:66).

Smuts had long enjoyed a reputation internationally as a liberal. Having embraced the British Empire as a protective canopy for South Africa's progress and freedom following the Boer defeat in the Second Anglo Boer War, he had come to subscribe to its liberal ethos. He had played a prominent role in drafting the constitution which had created the Union of South Africa as a Westminster-style (albeit white) democracy in

2 Following the formation of the United Party in 1934, Dr F. Malan and his followers had broken with the Prime Minister, J.B. Hertzog and formed the *Gesuiwerde Nasionale* (Purified National) Party, which in turn became the *Herenigde Nasionale* (Re-united National) Party after they were joined by some of Hertzog's followers who rejected South Africa's entry into World War II. For ease of reference in this chapter, I refer simply to the NP.

1910. Furthermore, he had served in Lloyd-George's Liberal-led coalition government during World War I before further burnishing his liberal credentials at its end by his pleas at Versailles for a more generous treatment of Germany than the Allies had proved willing to give (Lentin, 2010). In any case, there was always a marked tendency in Britain to heap the burden for South Africa's brutal racism on the Afrikaners (e.g. Barnes, 1930),[3] or more particularly, upon the successive iterations of the NP which had emerged at key moments in the Union's short history, first to the right of the Botha / Smuts's South African Party in 1914 and subsequently of the Hertzog / Smuts's United Party in 1934. In sum, although Smuts was never wholly free of criticism internationally (usually from missionary quarters), he was 'a political figure peculiarly immune to public criticism' (Schwarz, 2013:324) - despite his combining his professed commitment to liberal democracy with the necessity of white supremacy.

The Supremacist Democrat

In an essay he had written for a prize when he was a twenty-year old undergraduate at Stellenbosch, Smuts had proclaimed that 'the race struggle is destined to assume a magnitude on the African continent such as the world has never seen'. White unity was the 'necessary condition' for avoiding white annihilation (Hancock, 1962:30). In his youthful naivety, he was making explicit what was more often left unsaid amongst all but the most radical of those who proclaimed themselves 'Cape liberals'. While out of a mix of tradition, paternalism and electoral dependence on the small stratum of propertied and male Africans and coloured people who had become enfranchised under the Cape Colony's 'colour blind' franchise laws, they remained determined that the white vote would never be 'swamped'. Nor did they ever question the necessity for the white man to rule.

3 Even though, as Barnes noted in his preface, his Afrikaner was 'simply a personification of the general will of white South Africans as a class'.

Smuts's first stab at the franchise question was made in a speech he delivered in defence of Rhodes in Kimberley in 1895. The tenor of his argument was that democratic principle should be tempered by reality. In South Africa, the white people were confronted by a mass of natives, the overwhelming majority of whom were barbarous and uncivilised. While the law should recognise that an appreciable number of the latter had moved beyond an early stage of development, it did not seem unreasonable that natives should be treated differentially, safe in the knowledge that if the white people abused their power, they would arouse feelings of resentment dangerous to themselves (Hancock, 1962:56-57). Yet it was only after the Boer defeat in the Second Anglo Boer War that what Hancock refers to as Smuts's pragmatic approach to democracy was spelt out in extensive correspondence with John X. Merriman, the renowned Cape liberal. This began prior to the grant of self-government to the Transvaal and came to a climax in the build-up to Union.

In 1906, in preparation for his meeting with the new Liberal government in London, Smuts had prepared a memorandum in which he disputed proposals for an electoral system which had detailed an economic qualification for voters[4] by making the case for what he termed the 'true democratic principle' of adult male suffrage for white people, making no reference to the question of votes for people of colour. On his return, he had sent his memorandum to Merriman, who responded that while he was agreed with its overall content, he could not accept its franchise proposals. These were open to the same objection as the American Declaration of Independence in that they ignored three-quarters of the population that was coloured. He hastened to assure Smuts that he did not like the natives at all and wished there was no black man in South Africa, yet the reality was that they were there, and the only course was how to 'maintain the supremacy of our race and at the same time to do our duty'.

4 Made in the so-called Lyttleton Constitution (which was never implemented) of 1905.

There were two options: the Cape policy of votes for all persons of any colour who achieved the prescribed standards, or the policy pursued by the two Republics and Natal of denying them the franchise. His recommendation was to pursue the former: 'Give every man who qualifies a vote but set the qualifications reasonably high.' Such a procedure would disqualify many 'poor whites', yet by enfranchising a few 'rich blacks', it would provide a safety valve. This would offer 'the most reasonable guarantee against an explosion', while simultaneously denying a pretext for interference into South African affairs by 'busy bodies on both sides of the water' (Hancock, 1962:219-20).

Smuts's reply was revealing of the position which he was to maintain throughout the coming years:

> In principle I am entirely at one with you on the native question. I sympathize profoundly with the native races of South Africa whose land it was long before we came here to force a policy of dispossession of them. And it ought to be the policy of all parties to do justice to the natives and to take all wise and prudent measures for their civilization and improvement. But I don't believe in politics for them. ..... so far as the natives are concerned politics will to my mind only have an unsettling influence. I would therefore not give them the franchise, which in any case would not affect more than a negligible number of them at present. When I consider the political future of the natives in South Africa I must say that I look into shadows and darkness; and then I feel inclined to shift the intolerable burden of solving that sphinx problem to the ampler shoulders and stronger brains of the future.

Merriman's reply was telling. While conceding (in response to a barb by Smuts that he was an 'old Tory') his devout hope that South Africa would remain founded on 'an aristocratic basis', he observed that Smuts was pretending it would become a democracy - yet Smuts was no more a democrat than he! 'How could you without blushing talk of manhood suffrage' while

excluding two-thirds of the population from the vote and terming it 'democracy'? (Hancock, 1962:227)

In the event, Merriman's long-held enthusiasm for Union overcame his insistence for the qualified franchise throughout the entirety of South Africa and subsequently he accepted the compromise around the vote reached at the National Convention, whereby qualified Africans and coloured people retained the vote in the Cape but were denied it in the other three provinces. Nonetheless, as Hancock avers, although the debate on Native policy between Smuts and Merriman may have illuminated the main issues, it 'had settled none of them,' and Smuts never addressed Merriman's reasoning about the wisdom of a safety valve.

What is more germane here is that within a few years of the end of the Second Anglo Boer War, Smuts became widely lauded as a democrat, despite his openly stated belief in the virtues of white supremacy. This was not so contradictory as it appears to modern eyes. The joining of the British colonies and Boer states had long been an Imperial ideal, and Smuts had proved the main instrument in bringing it about under a constitution modelled along British parliamentary lines. After all, despite unease in Westminster about leaving the 'native' franchise to the Union's white politicians, the British themselves had to justify their beliefs in representative government at home with a system of Imperial rule abroad which was itself premised on the conviction that 'natives' were not ready to rule themselves.

So, when in February 1942, Smuts delivered a speech to the Institute of Race Relations in which he declared that the African urbanisation which segregation had sought to stem was inevitable, it seemed to signal a significant shift in his thinking.

Realist and Reformer

Smuts had always appeared to stand for unqualified white control of the state and hitherto had presented the Union government as presiding over a benevolent paternalism

under whose umbrella the African population would live in a world of benign chiefly governance and customary law. He had elaborated this justification for segregation in his Rhodes Memorial lectures at Oxford in 1929 when he had addressed the native question in detail. The thrust of his argument then had been that without a large European population 'as a continuous support and as an ever-present example and stimulus for the natives', Africa was destined to stagnate. At the same time, the nature of African society was such that Africans needed protection from the ravages of industrialisation. The territorial and cultural segregation of Africans was for their own good.

There was much in African society that needed to be preserved. The African retained some wonderful characteristics. No other race was so easily satisfied, so good-tempered and so carefree, qualities it had needed in abundance to endure the intolerable evils which had been inflicted on it over the ages. However, this happy-go-lucky temperament had its inevitable drawbacks. It was a bar to progress and had evolved no religion, no art, and no literature since 'the magnificent promise of the caveman'.

Such a race required a policy very unlike that which was suited to Europeans:

> If Africa has to be redeemed, if Africa has to make her own contribution to the world, if Africa is to take her rightful place among the continents, we shall have to proceed on different lines and evolve a policy which will not force her institutions into an alien European world, but which will preserve her unity with her own past, conserve that which is precious in her past, and build her future progress and civilization on specifically African foundations.

Smuts had argued in these lectures that the African way of life was disintegrating under the impact of the continent's incorporation into a white and more advanced world. Unless this disintegration was halted, native cohesion would be broken down, and governments would sit with vast hordes

of detribalised natives on their hands. The result would be 'chaos'. Consequently, the establishment of reserves for Africans, enabling their communities to live apart from white people would protect them from the dangers inherent in urbanisation and proletarianisation.

From the native point of view, nay, even more from the native point of view, the policy of African settlement is absolute necessity.

And yet there remained a problem. Africa's industrial development required African labour. This resulted in the African's migration from black territories to white. Worse, the labourer's family was prone to migrate away from the tribal home to join him, yet as soon as this was permitted, the entire system of territorial segregation was likely to break down. The only way to resolve this difficulty was through the system of labour migrancy, where the native retained his family home, 'not with the white man but in his own area'.

Smuts had both outlined the problem and come up with its solution, yet simultaneously his logic had faltered, for he had gone on to admit that in South Africa, migration and urbanisation had progressed too far. The situation had been rendered even more difficult by the 'justifiable fervour' with which urbanised natives living amongst white people clung to their rights. It was they who constituted the real crux of the problem, as they claimed to be civilised and Europeanised, and did not wish to be pushed back into the seclusion of their former tribal associations. Were it not for the urbanised and detribalised natives, he declared, the colour problem would be shorn of most of its difficulties. Alas, 'few acquainted with the facts and difficulties (could) profess to see clear daylight in the tangle of this problem' (Smuts, 1930).

Yet by 1942, apparently, he was beginning to see daylight, for in his speech to the SAIRR he admitted that existing policy was failing. He emphasised South Africa's rapid economic expansion, industry's insatiable demand for African labour, and the corresponding growth of the urban population. Urbanisation was eroding ethnic and racial distinctions,

resulting in the intermixture of the various 'Native tribes' and the wider population. These were observable facts. They refuted the theory that white and black people could live in totally separate territories. 'The policy of keeping Europeans and Africans completely apart for the self-preservation' had failed. The high hopes placed in it had been disappointed. How could it be otherwise? Throughout the length and breadth of Africa, a similar transformation was taking place, and the momentum was towards closer contacts between the races. 'Isolation had gone, and segregation has fallen on evil days.' A revolutionary change was taking place amongst the Native peoples of Africa. 'You may as well try to sweep the ocean back with a broom' (Hancock & van der Poel, 1973a:335-36).

Jonathan Hyslop has argued that Smuts's SAIRR speech was expressive of a significant shift in South African policies that took place during the years of Smuts's second premiership. These represented:

> the direct opposition of the attempt to drive the black working class out of the urban areas. Rather, they moved toward a strategy based on acceptance of black urbanization. The demands of South Africa participating in a global war unleased a radical, and in some respects quite effective, reorganization of the South African state, economy and racial arrangements (Hyslop, 2017:439).

It was a moment when Smuts allowed white liberal and social democratic officials to launch welfarist and reformist initiatives directed at addressing the social conditions of black people (Dubow & Jeeves, 2005). By 1942, the Department of Native Affairs had acknowledged the importance of pass law grievances, and convictions under these laws declined massively during the war years. Industrial conditions for black workers improved and their real wages rose substantially, with cost-of-living allowances made obligatory. In the same year, a commission was established to make recommendations for a national health service 'for all sections of the population' and new thinking encouraged a flourishing of public health initiatives, with South African exponents of 'social medicine'

becoming global leaders in their field (Reynolds, 2010). In 1944, a social security committee proposed comprehensive benefits for all South Africans, and a scheme for non-contributory old age and invalidity pensions for Africans were implemented, albeit at racially differentiated rates. In 1945, African education, hitherto largely paid for by a poll tax, was made wholly chargeable to the central exchequer, and actual expenditure upon this item increased more than five-fold during the period of Smuts's government.[5] The key point about these and other changes in social policy is that they recognised the breakdown of the African reserve system and the need to address the social conditions of a permanent black proletariat. This was only possible because South Africa's participation in the war had broken Smuts's alliance with the Hertzogite segregationists and opened the space for a new planning-oriented approach to social policy (Hyslop, 2017:453).

For Bill Freund (2018) this meant that South Africa emerged from the war as a quasi-developmental state. As in every other belligerent nation, the Smuts government had been compelled to suspend free-market policies in favour of extensive government intervention, adding that, as a Keynesian, Smuts was a proponent of state-directed industrial development that resulted in a significant reshaping of the economy. War-related production and the need for import-substitution had made manufacturing rather than mining the dominant growth sector of the economy, while the expansion of international trade after 1945 carried both mining and manufacturing even further along the road of industrial diversification. Even after the war, Smuts's regime was strikingly different from that of the apartheid government that followed, as it continued to give space to initiatives which accepted black urbanisation and attempted to create adequate urban social conditions for the new urbanised working class.

The shift in official policy was confirmed by the Report of the Native Laws Commission. Presented by its chairman,

5 From £909,340 in 1939 to £4,843,000 in 1947 (Hancock, 1968:481).

Justice H.A. Fagan in March 1948, this has been cited as the most liberal document produced under the auspices of a South African government hitherto (Evans, 1997). Appointed in 1946, its mandate was to examine the laws relating to Africans in urban areas, report on the operation of the pass laws, and consider future policy regarding migrant labour. Its major premise was that total territorial segregation had become impractical and outdated. Although the differentiation of the urban African population into settled and migrant labour communities should continue, it rejected the traditional doctrine that Africans had no right to remain in urban areas unless they were there to minister to the needs of white people. While it accepted that the migrant labour system should continue (the mining industry was excluded from its recommendations), it insisted that migratory labour should no longer be regarded as the only acceptable form of African labour in urban areas. The growth of the urban African population (including women and children) was inevitable, and the urban African labour force should be 'stabilised' by the extension of housing, pension and other welfare benefits. While it did not deny the need for controls over the movement of Africans into the towns, it proposed a rationalisation of the pass laws via the establishment of a system of labour bureaux to guide Africans into the right jobs (Suzman, 1948).

Smuts accepted the principles and proposals of the Fagan Report on behalf of the United Party, and despite some disquiet from within its ranks, it provided the basis for the party's programme with which it fought the 1948 election. However, the party remained unclear about how it would manage its political implications, repudiating attacks from its opponents that Fagan-style acceptance of African urbanisation would lead inevitably to racial and political equality. Smuts himself remained loftily vague. While insisting upon the recognition of the 'hard facts' laid out by the Fagan Commission, his view remained that while fully 'Europeanized' Natives would claim their right to citizenship, they would remain segregated politically and subordinated to white rule. Nonetheless, on 17 April 1946, Smuts declared to parliament that the idea of

trusteeship which he had thought sufficient four years earlier when he had addressed the Institute of Race Relations might not provide all the answers:

> but the idea and practice of guardianship also mean that as those portions of the population who are under our guardianship develop, one must to a certain extent grant them political rights (Hancock, 1948:490).

Hancock suggests that this was a cautious intimation of his readiness to consider limited improvements to Native parliamentary representation as established in 1936 (when the right of qualified Africans to vote in parliamentary elections had been abolished) - but not before the forthcoming elections (Hancock, 1948:490).

So Far, and No More

Hancock (1962:263), the prima donna of Smuts's biographers, refers to him as the 'actor, manager and producer' of the foundation of the new state of South Africa in 1910. According to Bill Schwarz (2013:288), Smuts himself never forgot that he was a founding father of South Africa. No less an authority than his son (Smuts, 1952:120) was to recall in his own hagiography that his father remembered his efforts to make the Union as 'his greatest single work'. That the forging of the Union, as a compromise of conflicting interests of the four colonies involved and between clashing constitutional principles, provided the political basis for South Africa's subsequent economic momentum has generally not been disputed. Equally, however, historians have looked back upon its entrenchment of white supremacy as its defining and ultimately fatal characteristic.

'I would rather not give them the franchise,' Smuts had written to Merriman in 1906 in response to the latter's plea for the 'Cape franchise' whereby the right to vote was determined by property and educational qualifications (Hancock, 1962:221). Ultimately, after extensive debate by the delegates at the National Convention, the deal was made that the existing

franchise laws in each of the four colonies would continue in place when they became provinces in the new union, with the qualified vote in the Cape being protected by the South Africa Act prescribing that any Bill to disenfranchise African and coloured voters would need to be passed by the two houses of parliament sitting together by a two-thirds majority of their total membership. In addition, although every member of the lower house was to be of European descent, four of the eight nominated members of the Senate would be chosen by virtue of their 'thorough acquaintance' with 'the reasonable wants and wishes of the Coloured races in South Africa' (Thompson, 1960:126-34).

Despite his pride in the part he had played in the founding of the Union, Smuts was to go along with Hertzog's abolition of the right of qualified Africans in the Cape to vote in elections in 1936. Following his party's loss of the election of 1924 to the National Party -Labour Party 'Pact', he had not only opposed Prime Minister Hertzog's 'civilized labour' enactments, arguing that they were not necessary for the protection of 'white civilization', but also his Natives Parliamentary Representation Bill, which proposed to abolish the Cape franchise in exchange for granting Natives throughout the Union seven white representatives in the House of Assembly, albeit with limited powers of voting. It was not that he opposed the idea of communal representation as such (Hancock, 1968:210), but rather that he believed that common roll voting in the Cape had provided for three generations of political stability and he doubted whether Hertzog's attempt to resolve the 'Native question' at a single stroke[6] was viable. In any case, he worried that Hertzog's proposed Native Representatives might hold the balance of power in parliament!

Hertzog had sought Smuts's cooperation in passing his bills, as he wanted both major political parties to back them

6 The Representation of Natives in Parliament Bill was accompanied by a Union Native Council Bill, a Natives Land Act (Amendment) Bill, and the Coloured Persons Rights Bill.

as expressive of white unity. Indeed, the two men met four times to discuss the bills, and by all accounts, these meetings were friendly, yet they proved unable to agree, and in February 1929, Hertzog re-introduced two of the bills in a revised form, which were even more racially restrictive than their earlier versions in 1926. Smuts's South African Party (SAP) fought the bills clause by clause, Smuts arguing instead for the convening of a National Convention or Commission to explore the way to find a comprehensive settlement of the 'native question'. Yet Hertzog had outmanoeuvred him, for by now, he was committed to holding a general election, and in the notorious 'Black Peril' campaign that followed, he had pilloried Smuts as dangerously soft on the natives. He had gained a resounding victory, the NP increasing its parliamentary majority, enabling it to abandon the alliance with the Labour Party (Blackman & Dall, 2022 for a lively account). Thereafter, he had pressed forward with his drive to remove black voters from the common roll, calling a joint session of the two houses of parliament after the election to appoint a joint committee to consider and report upon the issue.

Subsequent discussions culminated in the Natives' Parliamentary Representation Act of 1936, which (i) removed Cape voters from the common roll, but made provision for them to vote on a separate roll for three white representatives in the House of Assembly; (ii) made provision for the election of four white people to the Senate by a system of bloc voting by chiefs, local councils, urban advisory boards and election committees in all provinces; and (iii) created a Native Representative Council (NRC) of six white officials, and four nominated and twelve elected Africans. This was to be accompanied by a Native Trust and Land Bill which, while preventing the purchase of land by Africans outside the Native Reserves, provided for the expansion of the latter from the 7.3% of South Africa's land area laid down by the Natives Land Act of 1913 to a maximum of 13.7%.

The debates in parliament had widened divisions within the SAP over native policy. Smuts had responded by reformulating his outright opposition to Hertzog's attempt to

resolve the native question at one swoop into a doctrine that, if Africans were to lose their franchise on the Cape's common roll, they should be offered proportionate compensation. Come 1936, he had managed to convince himself that what was being offered by the two Native bills as a package constituted the quid pro quo for which he had been holding out, and he had proceeded to vote for their passage - despite his knowledge of the resolute opposition to the bills of the All-Africa Convention, chaired by Professor J.D. Jabavu, which had met in Bloemfontein the previous December.[7]

The sequel to these events has been extensively rehearsed in the literature. The expansion of the urban African population was accompanied by an increased militance of the African working class, this fuelled by war-generated growth in African industrial employment, continued restrictions on the rights of Africans to strike, and the diversion of industrial resources away from basic consumer products to satisfy war needs. This culminated in the African mineworkers' strike of 1946, which after a week was brought to an abrupt end by brutal police repression (which Smuts was to endorse). This gave further momentum to a post-war radicalisation of the African National Congress (ANC), the overthrow of its conservative leadership by its newly formed Youth League in 1948, and its subsequent turn to mass action. Yet of more immediate concern to Smuts was the widening breach between his government and the NRC, the body formally representative of African opinion created under the legislation of 1936. As Hancock (1968:482) points out, this was particularly worrying for Smuts, as he had accepted the NRC 'as an important element of the *quid pro quo*' he had been looking for to compensate Africans for the abolition of the Cape vote.

7 A deputation of the All-Africa Convention had met with Hertzog after the Bloemfontein meeting, and its representations had an apparent effect, as it had led to his scrapping of an earlier version of the Natives Representation Bill which would have deprived Africans of representation in the House of Assembly entirely. Hancock credits Smuts with having played a discreet role in having brought the meeting about (Hancock, 1968:265).

The changes in socio-economic policy introduced by the government during the war were not enough to satisfy the aspirations of the NRC. Its indirectly elected membership was scarcely radical, yet even before the end of the war, it had come to the conclusion that it commanded no official respect, and that it was serving no useful constitutional function. As the years passed by, its demands increasingly began to fall in line with those of the ANC, to which a number of its own more influential members belonged. By 1943, it was demanding that its own membership be directly elected by adult male suffrage, that its own composition and functions be enlarged and that African representation in parliament be increased from 3 to 10 Native representatives in the House of Assembly. By 1944, it was calling for the abolition of the pass laws and scrapping of segregation. Then, in August 1946, it passed a motion condemning what it termed the 'wanton shooting' of African mineworkers by the police during the strike, linking this to a demand for the recognition of African trade unions. Further disputes with officialdom culminated in its suspending its operations following its passage of a resolution which decried the government's 'continuation of a policy of Fascism' in defiance of the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and the recently proclaimed charter of the United Nations (UN) (Hancock, 1968:485; Ballinger, 1969:141-215; Bell, 1978).

Jan Hofmeyr, Smuts's liberal deputy, who had recently stood in as chair of the NRC,[8] wrote to Smuts (who was at the UN in New York) worrying about the radicalisation of its moderates, the latter replying that while there was need to liberalise social policy, it would be necessary to carry (white) 'public opinion' with it. However, when this was explained to the NRC when it resumed its interrupted session in November 1946, it was notably unimpressed, and rejected out of hand what Smuts had described in his reply to Hofmeyr as progress towards 'practical social policy away from politics' (Hancock, 1968:485-6).

8 Smit, the permanent chair, was a member of the South African delegation accompanying Smuts in New York.

The NRC had been aware that Smuts had recently suffered a 'severe mauling' at the UN by Mrs Vijay Lashmi Pandit, Indian Prime Minister Nehru's sister, who had linked South Africa's discriminatory treatment of its Indian citizens to a demand that South West Africa, which South Africa had administered under a mandate of the League of Nations following World War I, become a Trust Territory of the newly established UN.

At the UN's foundation in San Francisco in 1945, Smuts had played an influential role in drafting key documents, notably its Charter, which committed it to 'equal rights and self-determination of peoples'. Elected President of the new body's General Assembly, Smuts had urged that the Charter should have universal appeal, including a declaration that 'We the United Nations .... Declare our faith in basic human rights', his proposal being accepted (except that the word 'fundamental' was substituted for 'basic'). Although he was still at that point highly respected as an elder statesman, he had gone to San Francisco uncomfortably aware that the liberal principles he espoused on the world stage were contradicted by South Africa's racial policies at home.

Smuts had expected a rough ride, and that was what he had to endure during the following eighteen months. He was repeatedly attacked by Indian diplomats who cited the contradiction between the aspirations of the charter, which he himself had authored, and South Africa's discriminatory treatment of its Indian citizens. This had been most recently embodied in an Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill, whereby the government had sought to compensate recently negotiated restrictions on Indians' rights to residence in white suburbia and land purchase in Durban in exchange for limited parliamentary representation (by white people) in parliament. Labelled by the Indian community the 'Ghetto Act', this prompted a campaign of passive resistance, and had found its way on to the agenda of the first session of the UN General Assembly, where Smuts was about to seek approval of the new body for South Africa to incorporate South West Africa.

When proceedings came to a climax between 21 November and 8 December 1946, Smuts was compelled to listen 'patiently and courteously' to passionate speeches delivered by Mrs Pandit, seeking support for a motion that South African treatment of its Indian citizens was in conflict with the principles of the UN and they were entitled to the protection of its charter. Smuts argued in response that South Africa's treatment of its Indian citizens was a purely domestic matter, the Charter did not elevate political equality to a human right, and that in any case, there was not yet any agreed international formulation of fundamental human rights. Backed by Britain and other South African allies, Smuts sought to have the matter referred to the International Court of Justice, where he hoped that legal rather than political arguments would prevail. After the matter went back and forth in committee, it was at last returned to a final debate of the General Assembly where, the Indian delegation having agreed to a milder French-Mexican version of its own original proposal, secured the necessary two-thirds majority it was needed to pass, some of South Africa's traditional allies having chosen to abstain. India was triumphant! Smuts was undone! His high reputation had counted for nothing!

In practical terms, the vote had little purchase, as resolutions passed in the General Assembly were largely symbolic. Nonetheless, Smuts's humiliation had damaging political consequences at home, where he became the butt of extensive Nationalist criticism. He knew his championing of human rights and his defence of South Africa's racial policies was incompatible and opened him up to charges of hypocrisy.

The story, repeated in various biographies, tells how after the vote, Mrs Pandit, recalling an injunction by Gandhi to return home as a friend of Smuts, crossed the floor and begged his forgiveness if she had not met the high standard of behaviour set by the Mahatma. He is reputed to have replied, 'My child, you have won a hollow victory. The vote will put me

out of power at the next elections, and you will have gained nothing.'[9]

Smuts's embarrassment in New York certainly did not help him at home. But was his pessimism about the outcome of the forthcoming election really justified?

The 1948 Election: An Unnecessary Defeat

Despite Smuts's disconsolate remark to Mrs Pandit, the United Party went into the election of 1948 confident that it would win. Smuts himself had become increasingly convinced of victory as the campaign had progressed (Hancock, 1968:496). This fed wider expectation. Tom Macdonald, a contemporary commentator, expressed a predominant view: 'The Old Master' continued to stand out as 'the great personality of his epoch' (Macdonald, 1948:261). It was 'impossible' to see how the country could repudiate Smuts, in what surely was now the 78-year-old's 'last election'. Yet repudiate him it did, much to the surprise of even the NP, which had expected gains, but had not expected to win.

The fundamental story of the 1948 election is that the NP won more seats (70) than the UP (65) but lost the popular vote by a substantial margin (37.6 per cent of the votes cast to the UP's 49.1 per cent). It only secured an effective majority of 8 in the 150-strong House of Assembly via an electoral agreement with Havenga's Afrikaner Party, which won 9, thereby outgunning the UP's alignment with the Labour Party (6).[10] The imbalanced result was an outcome of three principal factors.

9 In fact, as Vineet Thakur (2017:86) has pointed out, Smuts had already left New York before the final vote was taken, and the exchange must have taken place earlier. He also relays that Smuts had confessed earlier to a member of the Indian delegation that while he was personally unhappy about the situation in South Africa, he could only take 'his people' to a certain point, and not beyond it, and warned him that India would come to reject his ousting.

10 Its majority fell to just five, if the likely backing of the three Native Representatives is also taken into account.

The first was the practice of the Delimitation Commission (which decided constituency boundaries) of 'loading' urban seats (a loaded seat being one with more voters than the average number of voters per constituency for all seats). This meant that fewer votes were needed to win seats in rural areas (where Afrikaners predominated) than in urban areas, a factor which favoured the NP.

Second, the high rate of migration of white people from rural to urban areas during the 1930s and 1940s was largely a migration of Afrikaners, this swelling the NP-leaning vote in a significant number of urban constituencies (Heard, 1974:7-13), which also gained momentum from post-war economic discontents.

The third factor which was the most immediately influential was the 'race issue'. 'For Malan, in 1948, as for Hertzog in 1929', the alleged 'Black Peril' was a politically potent battle cry' (Stultz, 1974:151). While most voters understood that a future Smuts government would follow a path of ad hoc, pragmatic adjustments to accommodate race pressures, the NP's steadfast stress on racial exclusivism re-united Nationalist support which had been divided by South Africa's entry into the recent war (in which many Afrikaners fought with distinction). Once the war was out of the way, it undercut the electoral margin of support which had sheltered fusion from the mid-1930s. Consequently, after 1948, the prospect of a united white nation through the promises of compromise and conciliation was lost, and white unity, if it were to be achieved, would have to be 'founded on principles dictated by Afrikaners' (Stultz, 1974:157-59).[11]

This brief summary of the received wisdom about the bare facts of the 1948 election invite further commentary to elaborate Smuts's own very major part in his own downfall. It is useful to deal with the three factors in reverse order.

11 I have borrowed the above summary from Southall (2022:29-30).

First, the *race issue.* His biographers elaborate this last factor by arguing, as he had stated to Mrs Pandit, that he was constrained by limits on his ability to sell his programme of gradual and pragmatic reform, as outlined by the Fagan Report, to many of the UP's historic supporters. Hancock (1968:504) depicts his campaigning as trying to sell the middle road (between the extremes of racial equality as opposed to the NP's racial exclusivism) which he had outlined in his Rhodes Memorial Lectures in 1929, of South Africa as a unitary state, in which the weaker races as well as the stronger must have electoral representation, taking his stand on the system as established in 1936. There was a need for white people to face up to the hard facts outlined by Fagan, and to implement his proposals for dealing with them. Yet as his biographers continue, many of the UP's historic supporters found these 'hard facts' difficult to swallow, and it was not only the reactionaries from Natal who feared that socio-economic reform would lead, willy-nilly, to political reform, resulting in white people being 'swamped'. Nor was Smuts's advocacy of a middle road helped by Hofmeyr, his liberal deputy and chosen successor as leader of the UP, being forced to deny Nationalist attacks that he was an advocate of racial equality, and that his liberalism provided a short-cut to Communism.

Mrs Ballinger, one of the three Native representatives in the House of Assembly, is more condemnatory. By 1948, she argues, Smuts was more and more convinced of the need for a change in colour policy but had not made up his own mind about the real nature or extent of the change that needed to be made. Nor was Hofmeyr any clearer, failing to evince 'any general philosophy' which would 'blaze a new trail in South African thought' (Ballinger, 1969:134). [12] This was a

12 Ballinger (1969:134) follows up by arguing Hofmeyr's inability, either to establish viable personal relations with the Africans sitting on the NRC or 'to gather round him those who would have been happy to find in him a leader under whose banner they might help to guide South Africa into more modern ways'.

situation which left Smuts's party extremely vulnerable to Nationalist attack:

> His failure to appreciate this seems to have derived from a miscalculation of the time factor in the situation. Curiously certain of victory in this election as he had been anxiously doubtful about the result in 1943, and taking his stand on the wisdom of meeting the problems of society as they developed – the pragmatic approach – he clearly counted on time to see how things would shape – and time to enable him to carry his people with him along the path which all his thought and emotion seemed to indicate as his eventual choice.....But he thought the first step for us was to unite our European people (Ballinger, 1969:136).

The question that is posed is whether he was as hamstrung by his right-wing supporters as is widely suggested. True, as in 1929, the Nationalists were painting Smuts as soft on the natives and now touting apartheid as necessary for white survival amidst a rising tide of black agitation, making an appeal to faith, whereas, in effect, Smuts's Fabian-esque middle road was making an appeal to reason. True, also, that in 1948, the modern panoply of surveys and focus groups was unavailable, and that Smuts had to steer his campaign according to received understanding of the electorate, information fed to him by his party machinery, and political instinct. Nonetheless, it is also true that there were those who thought Smuts's campaigning was too cautious, and that the electorate was not so inflexible on the racial question as he feared. Of these, the most cited is Mrs Ballinger (Hancock, 1968:504), who argued that the political arena was not so polarised as the NP was deliberately making out. Credence to this is the subsequent rise of the Torch Commando, described as the first mass movement to confront apartheid, formed by white ex-servicemen in 1951 to oppose the Nationalists' intent to remove coloured voters from the common roll (Kane-Berman, 2018). Fail in its mission though it did (admittedly, partly because of internal divisions around whether to accept coloured members), it indicates, as opined by Brotz (1977:12),

that 'There is no reason to assume that South Africa was then as bereft of common-sense as it later appeared to become under the post-1948 Nationalist regime'.[13]

Many members of the Torch Commando were Afrikaners who had served in the forces during the war, yet equally, Malan had made it his mission to re-unite Afrikanerdom following the breach with Hertzogism at the outset of the war and had enjoyed considerable success. Although the UP had swept to a large majority in the election of 1943, Malan had by this time marginalised the influence of the *Ossewa Brandwag* (Ox-Wagon Sentinel) and other openly pro-fascist paramilitary forces within the NP. Come the 1948 election, apart from playing on post-war economic discontents and white fears, he had forged his electoral alliance with the Afrikaner Party, formed by Havenga in 1941, to unite behind him supporters of the Hertzog brand of Nationalism at that point not willing to join the NP. Ultimately, this was to prove crucial, as when the results of the election came in, the 9 seats they won provided the NP with an overall majority.

It is therefore particularly germane to recall that Smuts had blown his own chance to ally with the Afrikaner Party, and thereby to re-incorporate those former followers of Hertzog who had not already decamped to the NP, back into the United Party. According to Mrs Ballinger (1969:267-68), Havenga had been waiting for an invitation to re-join the UP following the election of 1943. However, following the pummelling the Afrikaner Party had received in that election,[14] when broached on the issue, the UP leadership felt that Havenga had nothing to offer them. Indeed, Smuts is reported to have dismissed

13 I must admit in the spirit of honestly that I gave Brotz's analysis too short a shrift at the time of its publication, arguing that he completely over-estimated the potential for a 'moderate' white centre in politics (Southall, 1978). Although I do not disavow the main lines of my critique at that time, a re-reading of his work some forty (sic!) years later provides evidence of a more cogent argument than I allowed, and some fascinating insights into potentialities and limitations of liberalism in post-1945 South Africa.

14 It had won a mere 1.78% of the votes and no seats.

them 'as a lot of Fascists'. Yet this was a major miscalculation. Havenga retained political ambition, and his cold-shouldering by the UP left him nowhere to go but into the more welcoming arms of the NP. Brotz's judgement is harsh but surely correct:

> The fact was that Smuts's United Party, after the departure of the Hertzog wing, was no longer the same. It had returned in a way to being the old coalition of *Bloedsappe* (literally, blood South African Party men) – that is, Afrikaners who had a hereditary loyalty to Botha and Smuts – and English which came together after Hertzog had split from the South African Party. While this coalition proved able to govern South Africa during both World Wars, it had a similar political liability at the end of each. This was the absence of a clear-cut link with any representative of moderate Afrikaner nationalism (Brotz, 1977:15).[15]

This leads on the second issue, the demographic factor, the drift of Afrikaners to the towns during the 1930s and 1940s, where they undermined the UP's electoral predominance. It was not that the UP was unaware of this. Indeed, it had been given a strong warning about it by a string of defeats in by-elections leading up to the 1948 election. Yet rather than seeking to counter this by re-invigorating its ability to campaign and state its case, Smuts had allowed the UP organisation to wither. Most of its best constituency officials had decamped in 1939, either following Hertzog into the Afrikaner Party or joining the HNP; its grassroots membership had shrunk; and it had neglected fund-raising

15 Space is too short to develop this line of argument in more detail, save to say that Dr E.G. Malherbe, a leading liberal-centrist and by now the Rector of Natal University, but who had served as Director of National Intelligence during the war (so may be counted as having known a thing or two about the lie of the political land), is cited by Brotz (1977:18-19) and Southall (1978:183-87) as having advised Smuts in the strongest terms that to forge an alliance with the Afrikaner Party, he would have to be prepared to break with Hofmeyr, and even agree to serve under Havenga as deputy prime minister, as he had done under Hertzog previously.

and was desperately short of money (White, 1989). Had Louis Esselen, who had served as party secretary for many years and who 'had never been afraid to tell Smuts unpleasant things about his party' (Hancock, 1968:496; see also Tothill, 1989) not died in 1945, perhaps the UP might have been less complacent in its expectations of victory. As it was, Smuts even ignored warnings from his own constituency officials in Standerton that his own seat was in peril, with the result that he himself went down to a humiliating defeat by a thoroughly forgettable candidate.

Finally, there is the third, and perhaps most telling factor, Smuts's refusal to tackle the imbalance in the electoral system which resulted in a significant undervaluation of the urban vote. This was one issue which UP officials had raised with him, but despite the fact that the large majority he had won in 1943 had given him considerable power to reform 'the rules and customs' of delimitation, he dismissed their pleas out of hand. Hancock (1968:506) records him saying that although he recognised that the existing arrangements were damaging to the UP (after all the SAP had won the popular vote in 1929), they had their roots 'in the pact of good faith which had created and must sustain the constitution'.

The generous interpretation of Smuts's stance is that to say that it was an honourable refusal to change the rules of the game in his own favour. Yet in retrospect we know now that once they were in power, his opponents had no such scruples, and once they had moved into power, they embarked on a series of constitutionally dubious moves to amplify their majority, starting by granting white people in South West Africa six seats which they knew they were sure to win before launching their campaign, achieved eventually (in 1955) only by constitutional chicanery, to remove coloured voters from the common roll. These were part and parcel of the whole panoply of policies and practices which narrowed the scope even for 'white' democracy, and which entrenched Nationalist hegemony under apartheid. While Smuts's defenders might argue that it is unfair to fault him for not predicting this future, the obvious response is that having knowledge of the

pro-fascist leanings of significant elements within the NP, he should have been much more wary of the risks of allowing his opponents into power.

The irony in all this, of course, is that during the making of the constitution, at the National Convention in 1908-09, much debate had attended the issue of whether votes should be of equal value or, as had been a long-established tradition, especially in the Cape, the votes of those living in rural areas should be overrepresented. Yet because in the 1907 election in the Transvaal, the performance of their *Het Volk* party had proved that a moderate Afrikaner party could attract English-speaking votes, Botha and Smuts had swung behind an acceptance of 'equal rights' as a price worth paying if it would bring about 'conciliation' and bi-partisan support for the new Union. Furthermore, because Smuts had been persuaded by enthusiastic backers of proportional representation in England that such a system would ease tensions between the two ethnic blocs of the white population, they had pushed for the adoption of the Single Transferable Vote (STV) electoral system. Yet ultimately, the push for STV had come to nothing, and because it had suited the personal political interests of the majority of delegates (who came from rural areas), the Convention had adopted a Cape-style plurality system, which over-represented rural voters (Thompson, 1975a, 1975b). In short, the choice of electoral system had been far more a grubby deal than a matter of political principle, so given that as in 1929, its disproportionate outcomes deprived the majority of the electorate of their choice of government, Smuts's failure to correct the system when he had the chance was a major, and very conscious, act of omission.

Nor was this omission consistent with his professed stance that the deal struck in 1910 was sacrosanct. That deal had protected the Cape franchise for qualified Africans, yet Smuts himself had participated in its removal in 1936. His inconsistency smacks at best of hubris, his personal arrogance that he knew best, and that South Africa would not reject him. The far more serious charge is that it was a failure of courage.

Conclusion: Afraid of Greatness

There is no guarantee that even if Smuts had been returned to power in 1948 that South Africa would have gone far in a different direction. After his death in 1950, and that of Hofmeyr (in 1948), the leadership of the UP passed to two lacklustre leaders who were far more disposed to pander to white racial prejudices than to challenge them in South Africa's long-term interest. If the UP had won in 1948, it is more than a little possible that, buffeted by a rising tide of black political organisation and consciousness, the white electorate would have kicked it out in 1953 (although it is noteworthy that the NP failed to win a popular majority until the election of 1958). Nor should we discount the argument that, amidst the turmoil of post-war Africa, white settler regimes - of which South Africa was the most advanced industrially - were inherently programmed to become more repressive the more they were faced by threats by rising African middle and working classes from below (Good, 1975). Yet in contrast, there were liberal politicians who argued at the time, and liberal academics in abundance who have argued subsequently, that there was another way, that had South Africa's white politicians grasped the nettle in the 1950s, they might have negotiated their way forward to a political accommodation with a black majority which would have provided for a protection of minority interests, thereby avoiding the worst of the violent confrontations of the 1970s and 1980s.[16]

We shall never know whether the liberals were right. But what can be argued is that, although Smuts had been aware since his student days, the 'racial question' was the major issue confronting South Africa, he was never prepared to grapple with it politically. He perpetually kicked the can down the road. He was as much unwilling as he was unable to resolve the contradictions between his liberalism, as expressed by his promotion of human rights at the UN, and his defence of white

16 I refer to the liberals of the day such as E.G Malherbe and Margaret Ballinger, and academic liberals, such as Heribert Adam, who in later years were to promote the case for consociationalism in South Africa.

supremacy. Nor was he prepared to act on his realisation that black demands for political inclusion were destined to grow and could not be stuffed back into the box of increasingly impoverished rural reserves.

We are left with a feeling of frustration, that despite Smuts's immense political stature, when he was given the opportunity to move South Africa in a different direction, he lacked the courage to do so, that he was afraid of failure.

The irony is that his career ended in failure anyway.

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11. Smuts, Holism, and Political Philosophy

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Introduction

After his defeat in the South African parliamentary elections in 1924, Jan Christiaan Smuts briefly 'retired' to his farm at Irene where, in an eight-month period, he produced a 350-page book, *Holism and Evolution* (Smuts, 1926). To some, this was idiosyncratic; Smuts was known as a military and political leader, but not as an academic writer. Nevertheless, Smuts's book was widely reviewed and, although it did not have lasting scholarly impact, it introduced a new term into popular discourse - holism. The views expressed in *Holism and Evolution* were, arguably, influenced by Smuts's studies and long interest in philosophy and may have had an influence in his later political activity both in South Africa and internationally (e.g., in the creation of the United Nations and in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights). In recent years, *Holism and Evolution* has been reprinted, and there have also been a number of studies on Smuts's life and his political career, and so a discernment of his views - and, specifically, given the focus on his politics, of whether he had a political philosophy - is timely. The present paper attempts to discern Smuts's political philosophy by focusing on *Holism and Evolution* - his most mature work - and, to an extent, a late essay on 'freedom.'

In this chapter, I want to argue that the early twentieth century South African political leader, Jan Christiaan Smuts (1870-1950), may rightly be regarded as having a political philosophy, and that its foundations can be found in his 1926 work, *Holism and Evolution*. In doing so, I want to argue

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that this political philosophy also reflects the influence of philosophical idealism, and that it illustrates a relation of this idealism to politics. (This is not an unusual view, as a number of South African philosophers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took an interest in, and sometimes were involved in, politics (Lord, 1921/2006; Hoernlé, 1939; Sweet 2010a). Indeed, many of them were influenced by the idealist movement in philosophy, which itself saw a connection, or exhibited a connection, between philosophy and politics.[1] Still, Smuts is an unusual case. He never taught philosophy, and most of his life was engaged in the public sphere - as a lawyer, as a military leader, and as a political leader. Moreover, Smuts himself denied that *Holism and Evolution* was a ''treatise on philosophy''[2] and, in this work, he made few explicit references to the philosophers of his time.

The aim of this chapter is to detect what kind of *political* philosophy one can discern in Smuts's mature writings, what are its foundations; and what are some of its implications. To do this, I begin with a brief account of Smuts's intellectual background. I then provide a summary of his theory of holism, as presented in *Holism and Evolution* and, though to a lesser extent, two short essays from the late 1920s. Third, I identify three key concepts central to what I claim is his political philosophy, explain what he sees as their implications, and briefly consider a challenge to them from a leading figure of the period. I conclude that what Smuts offers is a nascent political philosophy that reflects broadly liberal, idealist views.

Background

Jan Christiaan Smuts had an eclectic and broad education and formation, and it was one in which philosophy had an important role. When he graduated from Victoria College

1 More broadly, see, for example, Green (1888/1997); Bosanquet (1923/2001); Jones (1909).

2 Smuts (1927). Although *Holism and Evolution* was first published in 1926, Smuts found that it had several misprints or errors. These were corrected in the 1927 edition.

at Stellenbosch in 1891, he was unique amongst students in the BA examination - indeed, for at least the two preceding decades - to have received honours in both 'literature and philosophy'' and 'mathematics and natural science.'[3] His professor in philosophy and literature was Thomas Walker, and Walker had an influence on Smuts. Walker had studied at the University of Edinburgh (MA 1870, 1st, Classics), before a brief period of study on the European continent and emigrating to South Africa in 1876 (Sweet, 2010b). Walker was influenced by British idealism (Duvenage, 2001); his teachers were the personal idealist, Alexander Campbell Fraser, and the anti-Hegelian, Henry Calderwood[4], and, as we see from student notebooks from the period, Walker passed these ideas on to his students.[5]

Following graduation, Smuts received the 'Ebden Scholarship for Overseas Study,' which he used to study law at Christ's College, Cambridge. At that time, Cambridge was home to a number of 'young' idealist philosophers, such as J.M.E. McTaggart (1866-1925) and J.S. MacKenzie (1860-1935). And though Smuts dedicated himself to his legal studies, he also sought to attend the lectures of James Ward, usually regarded as a 'personal idealist' philosopher. Although Ward apparently refused Smuts permission to attend his classes, Smuts maintained an interest in philosophy as well as in

3 See University of the Cape of Good Hope (1912:520). Smuts ranked second in honours in both of these areas; Peder Anker's comment (2001:42) about Smuts's ranking seems to be mistaken.

4 Some approximate contemporaries were D.G. Ritchie (at Edinburgh, 1869-74) and Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison (at Edinburgh 1873-78); like Walker, they had Calderwood and Campbell Fraser as professors.

5 Smuts graduated one year after the Afrikaner philosopher and clergyman Nicholas J. Brümmer and they had mutual friends. For some information on philosophy at Strassburg at the time, see "B: Europa," in N.J. Brümmer papers. For Smuts's notebooks from Victoria College and Cambridge, see Smuts papers, National Archives, [New] Box 313/2.

literature and natural science.[6] Moreover, during his time in Cambridge, he audited courses in related areas (such as lectures on politics by Henry Sidgwick (Smuts, 1930:151)) and wrote on philosophical questions - an essay on *Nature and Function of Law in the History of Human Society* (published as *Law, A Liberal Study*) (1893), and an essay on science and philosophy, *On the Application of some Physical Concepts to Biological Phenomena* (1892-93).[7]

Upon graduating in law, with the distinction of having passed 'brilliantly' both tripos in a single year (Hancock, 1962:47), Smuts spent the summer of 1894 in Strassburg (today Strasbourg in France, but at that time in Germany), where he went to study 'Hegelian philosophy' - although it is not certain exactly what texts he studied or with whom.[8] Smuts had, by that time, also come to be interested in (German) Romanticism and American transcendentalism. When he returned to England to study for admission to the bar, he received a grant to write on a topic of his choosing (Anker, 2001:43). Thus, from the end of 1894 to the beginning of 1895, Smuts wrote a book on the American transcendentalist poet, Walt Whitman, and Whitman's notions of 'the whole' and of 'personality.'[9] Whitman had been influenced by Hegel, and so,

6 See Smuts's letter to Ward of 8 Dec 1920, where Smuts refers to meeting Ward at the home of H.J. Wolsterholme in 1892 and asking whether he might attend Ward's lectures on metaphysics. See [New] Box 186 [old Box 1], Folder 1. MSP 94 Jan Smuts papers. National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria.

7 See Smuts papers, National Archives; see also Hancock (1962:36, 38).

8 See letter to M.J. Farrelly, August 27, 1894. Smuts papers, National Archives, Box 186 [old Box 1]; see also Hancock and van der Poel (1966). In the remains of his personal library in the Smuts House Museum at Irene, South Africa, there are copies, annotated by Smuts, likely in the mid-1890s, of Friedrich Paulsen's *System der Ethik* and of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* and *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*.

9 Smuts (1973). Why Smuts chose to write on Whitman is a subject of speculation. Smuts writes that he would have preferred to write on Goethe, but that the literature on Goethe was extensive, whereas that on Whitman was much

perhaps not surprisingly, we find in this early book references to Hegel, as well as to Plato, Aristotle, and particularly Goethe - though the book was not published during Smuts's lifetime.

When Smuts returned to South Africa at the end of 1895, his interests focused on law and politics. He served as a military leader in the Second Anglo Boer War (1899-1902), and, afterwards, as a cabinet minister in the Transvaal government, and was instrumental in the creation of the Union of South Africa (1910). Throughout this time, he maintained an interest in philosophy. It is reported, for example, that, during the war, he carried with him a copy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.[10] Moreover, from about 1909 to 1912, Smuts wrote a 13-chapter philosophical 'essay' entitled *An Inquiry into the Whole* (Smuts, 1912), though it, too, was left unpublished. Smuts served as Prime Minister of South Africa from 1919 to 1924, but also sought to keep abreast of philosophical currents and discussion, and had English friends send him, periodically, philosophical books.[11] Moreover, in addition to pursuing interests in natural science and ecology, Smuts carried on correspondence on philosophical topics, so that,[12] after his defeat in parliamentary elections in 1924, he had the materials at hand to write *Holism and Evolution* in just eight months.

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less so. Some say that Whitman was, in fact, much closer to Smuts's thinking. According to Callie Joubert, Whitman had a clearer understanding of the 'whole' and of 'personality,' and so "Smuts used Whitman to *illustrate* that personality is the highest phase in the process of creative evolution" (Joubert, 2016, emphasis mine).

10 Smith (1923:xxvi). See also, for example, Gravett (2022:18).

11 For example, from 1902 to 1917, he had the help of his friend and confidant – who was also a close friend of James Ward – H.J. Wolstenholme (1846-1917). In 1920, he also asked Ward whether he might do so as well.

12 For example, with Wolstenholme, J.M. Keynes, and Ward – see "Jan Smuts Letters, 1902-1950," in Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa; See also the Smuts letters in the National Archives, Pretoria, and at the Smuts House Museum, Irene, South Africa.

Archives reveal subsequent correspondence with some philosophers about *Holism and Evolution* and the idea of holism in general[13], and the book was lightly revised in 1927 and in 1936, although Smuts never carried out a proposed second volume[14] or a contemplated entirely rewritten volume. He wrote a few short expositions of his theory of holism in 1929 and - perhaps his only other philosophical text - a 1934 lecture as Rector of University of St. Andrews on the topic of 'freedom.'

Smuts's philosophical views, then, are to be found principally in his three books - *Walt Whitman: A Study in the Evolution of Personality*, *An Inquiry into the Whole*, and *Holism and Evolution* - but, obviously, his mature views are to be found most extensively in the latter volume.

Holism and Evolution is a curious text. Smuts himself writes that it is neither a book of philosophy nor of science, and it contains relatively few references to contemporary philosophical theories. Indeed, the discussion of philosophical issues is rather cursory. Smuts says that it is a book on the borderland of philosophy and science, but also that it is 'an introductory sketch' (Smuts, 1927:x). He says little of its purpose or provenance, but it has been argued that one finds in this work ideas that have a close affinity with many idealist views (Sweet, 2024). Interestingly, however, the idealism that one putatively finds here is not the 'absolute idealism' drawing on Hegel and on near contemporaries such as Bernard Bosanquet, Henry Jones, and J.A. Smith, but, rather, on Cambridge 'personal idealists,' such as James Ward and Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison. Thus, to appreciate Smuts's political philosophy, one needs to have a sense of his personal

13 For example, with J.H. Muirhead, H.B. Joachim, W.D. Ross, R.B. Haldane, and J.A. Smith – see "Jan Smuts Letters, 1902-1950," in Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

14 Smuts (1927) writes: "I have no time at present to do more than write an introductory sketch; but I hope in the years to come to find time to follow up the subject and to show how it affects the higher spiritual interests of mankind" (Smuts, 1927:x).

idealist or personalist philosophy in general, and, in particular, of what he called his theory of 'holism.'[15]

Holism

Smuts wrote that *Holism and Evolution* is 'a book neither of Science nor of Philosophy, but of some points of contact between the two' (Smuts, 1927:328). By holism, Smuts means 'the theory which makes the existence of 'wholes' a fundamental feature of the world. It regards natural objects, both animate and inanimate, as wholes and not merely as assemblages of elements or parts. It looks upon nature as consisting of discrete concrete bodies and things... And these bodies or things are not entirely resolvable into parts' (Smuts, 1929:640). Not only are wholes a fundamental feature of the universe, but it is the development of wholes that, he argues, lies behind the evolutionary process (Smuts, 1927:101). Wholes, then, 'are the real units of nature' (Smuts, 1927:101). They 'are not mere artificial constructions of thought, they point to something real in the universe' (Smuts, 1927:88; repeated 101). (He is not, then 'concerned with metaphysical wholes' (Smuts, 1927:145), but about 'life' (Smuts, 1927:100) and 'organisms' (Smuts, 1927:145).) Thus, in *Holism and Evolution*, Smuts writes that 'Every organism, every plant or animal, is a whole, with a certain internal organisation and a measure of self-direction, and an individual specific character of its own.' But, he continues, 'What is not generally recognised is that the conception of wholes covers a much wider field than that of life, that its beginnings are traceable already in the inorganic order of Nature'; indeed, 'in a certain limited sense the natural collocations of matter in the universe are wholes; atoms, molecules and chemical compounds are limited wholes' (Smuts, 1927:100).

15 In addition to *Holism and Evolution* (1st ed.,1926), see Smuts (1929) (the *Encyclopedia Britannica* entry on Holism), Smuts et. al. (1929), and his 1927 lecture "Theory of Holism" (Smuts, 1940). *Holism and Evolution* appeared in two subsequent editions with a series of (minor) revisions, in 1927 and 1936.

How do wholes come to exist? Smuts writes that 'The creation of wholes, and ever more highly organised wholes, ...is an inherent character of the universe' (Smuts, 1927:101). Wholes are also dynamic. Smuts writes, as 'the elements or parts cohere and coalesce into the structure or pattern of a whole, the whole must itself be an active factor or influence among them... Whole and parts mutually and reciprocally influence and modify each other...' (Smuts, 1929:640). And, overall, 'from the most inchoate, imperfect, inorganic wholes to the most highly developed and organised - is [Smuts writes,] what we call Evolution' (Smuts, 1927:101).

Smuts is influenced by Darwin's account of evolution, but there are differences. First, Smuts sees evolution in terms of the evolution of wholes, and not species via natural selection. Second, he writes that the task of evolution is 'whole-making,' as distinct from – as some idealists had it – 'soul making' (Smuts, 1927:327, 346).[16] Third, this 'whole-making' is creative, it is not 'determined' (Smuts, 1927:146, 319). Smuts writes that 'Evolution [is] not a mere vague and indefinable creative impulse or élan vital, ... but something quite definite' (Smuts, 1927:102).

In many earlier authors, evolution was regarded as mechanistic, and Smuts suggests that this view is also a feature of some idealisms, such as Hegel's – namely, that 'the full volume of reality was there at the beginning' (Smuts, 1927:90), and that what followed was simply a mechanistic unfolding. Holism, however, provides 'an undetermined, creative element' (Smuts, 1929:642). Moreover, for Smuts, this 'creative evolution' is not just a matter of the development of the physical organism but has an 'inward spiritual holistic character' (Smuts, 1927:89).

Smuts says that one can see this holistic evolutionary development in four stages: matter, life, mind, and personality.

16 Here, there may be an allusion to Bosanquet's discussion of the promotion of individuality as a matter of (what the nineteenth century English poet, John Keats, also called) "soul-making" (Bosanquet, 1913:63-66).

Mind has a distinctive role. Mind is a 'marked central control which [at first] is still mostly implicit and unconscious' (Smuts, 1927:109), but which develops consciousness, freedom, and creative power. It exists in animals. But Mind is also, he writes, 'the basis of the Reason' (Smuts, 1927:252). Moreover, 'In the Reason, Mind, instead of pursuing [an] individualistic, purposive activity,' reflects holism moving 'towards more regulation, a higher coordination and a greater order' (Smuts, 1927:252).

Beyond 'Mind' there is 'the highest most evolved whole,' namely what Smuts calls [human] 'Personality' (sometimes, though not always, capitalised)[17]. Personality is the fourth and final 'series' or stage of evolutionary development (Smuts, 1927:270). Smuts does not provide a clear definition of Personality, but its basis is the Will, it is identified with the Self, and it is 'fundamentally an organ of self-realisation' (Smuts, 1927:303).

In Mind and the earlier 'series' (i.e., life and matter), there were more and less complete wholes, and so, now, it is not surprising that there are more and less complete personalities. Moreover, what personality is, and the value of personality, Smuts writes, have become more apparent over time; recently, however, it has come to be associated with the 'sacredness' of human life and the 'inalienable rights of human beings' (Smuts, 1927:292). Personality is not, however, 'merely a juristic or religious or philosophical concept, but as a real factor which forms the culminating phase in the synthetic creative Evolution of the universe' (Smuts, 1927:292). The study of Personality – what is also 'the synthetic science of Human Nature' (Smuts, 1927:271, 292) – he argues, will 'become the basis of a new Ethic, a new Metaphysic' (Smuts,

17 In *Holism and Evolution*, Personality is distinctively human; there is no divine personality. This is not the case in Smuts's earlier writings, such as *An Inquiry into the Whole*, however (Smuts, 1927).

1927:294), because it presents the most complete sense of 'whole.'[18]

Personality, then, is putatively the highest stage of holistic development or evolution. While, as noted above, Smuts does not offer a definition of 'personality,' one can understand personality, he claimed, by looking at biographies. The reason for this, Smuts writes, is that 'Personality is uniquely individual' (Smuts, 1927:293-294). Thus, to understand such a whole, we need to look, not at a generic description of a person, but to specific individuals. Consequently, Smuts proposes that one 'should study the biography of noted personalities as expressions of the developing Personality' (Smuts, 1927:293-94) - something which he had suggested and developed in earlier work, such as in his book on Walt Whitman.

Interestingly, however, not all 'personalities' are suitable for understanding Personality. For example, Smuts writes that 'Many distinguished persons appear to be full grown in early manhood [but] thereafter to undergo no further growth' (Smuts, 1927:295) - and, so, they do not help one to grasp Personality. '[A]nother class of persons [he writes]... consist of those who do not seem to have much of an inner self at all, whose activities and interests are all of an external character, who live not the inner life of the spirit but the external life of affairs' (e.g., 'public men, men of affairs, administrators, business men and others, whose whole mind seems to be absorbed by the practical interest of their work') (Smuts, 1927:295). Smuts allows that they 'may be able, competent, conscientious men, they may even be brilliant men of affairs, with great gifts of leadership... [but that] they [too]

18 It is interesting that Smuts does not elaborate on these connections to ethics and metaphysics in *Holism and Evolution* and, only indirectly, in his later work. References to 'dignity' and 'individual rights' that are not simply juristic suggest that there is a basis for them that is not merely 'empirical.' Presumably, these issues were to be the focus of his hoped-for later work on holism, although they are also anticipated in his earlier writings.

are lacking in that inwardness, that inner spiritual life which is the most favourable medium for the study of Personality' (Smuts, 1927:295-296). Instead, to understand Personality, Smuts holds, we need to look at the 'inner self' of a person, and its capacity for growth, i.e., 'the lives of poets, artists, writers, thinkers, religious and social innovators ... They are often people with inner lives and interesting personalities, with an inner history of continuous development' (Smuts, 1927:297). These, then, are illustrations of the 'wholes at their best' that holism can produce – and which, presumably, people should choose to emulate.

One's 'inner life' and one's relations to other personalities, then, are important to the development of Personality. But Smuts does not suggest that these features are a matter of religion, ethnicity, or race[19] - and when he uses the term 'race' in *Holism and Evolution*, it is almost always as a synonym for 'species.'[20]

19 Indeed, Smuts envisages that the human race will be succeeded by a "higher race" (Smuts, 1927:187).

20 The sole passage in *Holism and Evolution* where Smuts may possibly be referring to 'race' in a narrower sense than that of the human species is in Smuts's critique of the views of the German evolutionary biologist August Weismann (1839-1914) (Smuts, 1927:199, 208-212). Here, Smuts discusses the issue of the differentiation between the "reciprocal development" of the individual and the race.
There have been some allegations that Smuts's holism was "racist" and "eugenicist"; (American Marxist sociologist) John Bellamy Foster states that a junior contemporary of Smuts, the Marxist biologist Lancelot Hogben (1895-1975), attacked Smuts for his "racial eugenics" and his "ecologically racist holism" (Foster, 2010a:324; see Foster 2010b, and the reference to Smuts's "racist eugenics" at p. 116). Hogben's *The Nature of Living Matter* (1930), which reprints, with minor changes, his 1929 response to Smuts's paper of 1929, presented at the British Association for the Advancement of Science (Smuts et al., 1929), does not, however, make any association between the notion of eugenics (a term used only four times by Hogben) and Smuts. Hogben's (and Foster's more polemical) critique of holism seems to be that holism is associated with an 'anti-mechanism' or a 'vitalism' or an idealism - terms that they neither explain nor define - that

Admittedly, Smuts does suggest that there are things beyond individual 'personalities' that might seem to be greater 'wholes' (Smuts, 1927:176, 271 seq.). For example, in *An Inquiry into the Whole*, Smuts refers to 'the Whole' (capitalised and in the singular) and, in *Holism and Evolution*, at times he refers to 'the great Whole' (capitalised, Smuts, 1927:250; but see 102, 347, with no cap) or a 'Supreme Whole' (Smuts, 1927:347; see 250). Moreover, he mentions 'human associations like the State' (Smuts, 1927:110), 'the creations of the human spirit in all its greatest and most significant activities,' 'works of art,' and 'the great ideals of the higher life' (Smuts, 1927:100-101) - all of which have characteristics of the whole or are even called 'wholes.' Or, again, one may speak of a divine being, or the universe itself, as a 'whole,' that would suggest something beyond Personality. Yet Smuts argues that to read him in this way is a mistake.

In the first case, while he does sometimes capitalise the word 'Whole' in *Holism and Evolution*, and uses terms such as 'the great Whole,' this is an exception in his later work. Rather, he almost always refers to 'wholes' - plural and with a lower case. And he explicitly distinguishes his view from the 'Absolutists' (whom he leaves nameless in Smuts (1926)), who might hold that the Absolute is such a whole.

In the second case, although Smuts allows that some might refer to 'human associations like the State,' or 'creations of the human spirit,' or to works of art as 'wholes,'

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is opposed to their own Marxism. (Similar claims have been made in reference to another contemporary critic of Smuts, A.G. Tamsley (see Foster, 2010b:116)). While I cannot enter into the discussion here, Foster's presentation of Hogben and, more generally, of Smuts's holism seems simply to repeat the account of Peder Anker (2001), and neither point to any text in *Holism and Evolution*, or in Smuts's accounts of holism, to support their claims of a direct relationship between the theory of holism and racial hierarchy. (Bowler, 2014:177, and Tobey, 1981:189, provide a more balanced account of early critiques of Smuts.)

he regards them, rather, as what he calls 'fields.'[21] Wholes, Smuts writes, are 'interlocked, and embrace and influence each other' through their 'fields' (Smuts, 1927:18) - and it is in this way that they connect with one another. This notion of 'field' is 'a phenomenon which, Smuts writes, is 'universal in the realms of thought and reality alike.' Every 'thing' [and every concept, and every whole] 'has its field.' Smuts proposes that 'It is in these fields and these fields only that things ... happen'; 'but for their fields, [wholes] would be unintelligible, their activities would be impossible, and their relations barren and sterile' (Smuts, 1927:18).

Thus, he writes,

> When we come to consider a group of wholes we see that, while the wholes may be mutually exclusive, their fields overlap and penetrate and reinforce each other, and thus create an entirely new situation. Thus we speak of the atmosphere of ideas, the spirit of a class, or the soul of a people. The social individuals as such remain unaltered, but the social environment or field undergoes a complete change..., which creates the appearance and much of the reality of a new organism. Hence, we speak of social or group or national organisms. But as a matter of fact there is no new organism; the society or group is organic without being an organism; holistic without being a whole (Smuts, 1927:348).[22]

21 Smuts explains: "One of the most salutary reforms in thought which could be effected would be for people to accustom themselves to the idea of fields, and to look upon every concrete thing or person or even idea as merely a centre, surrounded by zones or aurae or penumbrae of the same nature as the centre, only more attenuated and shading off into indefiniteness" (Smuts, 1927:19).

22 There seem to be some resonances here between Smuts's notion of 'group fields' or 'conjoint fields' and idealist notions of 'dominant ideas' and 'general will' (see Bosanquet, 1894, 1897). Smuts writes, for example, "The group field is so to say the multiplication of all the individual fields," and that this is a matter of "social psychology" (Smuts, 1927:348).

In short, Smuts writes: 'Groups, families, churches, societies, nations are organic but not organisms' (Smuts, 1927:348).

To the third concern - whether the universe or a divine being is a whole greater than 'Personality' - Smuts's response seems somewhat evasive. He writes 'It may be that the universe is a whole in the making. That has been suggested as a possible view. But as yet no such whole can be discerned or inferred' (Smuts, 1927:350). Still, it is difficult to say how far is Smuts is committed to this assertion. Interestingly, in his earlier work, such as *An Inquiry into the Whole*, he does allow that there may well be a divine being or that the universe overall is a 'whole.' Moreover, in *Holism and Evolution*, Smuts realises that he leaves questions of ethics and metaphysics unresolved - 'These applications of the concept of Holism lie beyond the scope of the present work' (Smuts, 1927:269) - hence, the mention of the need for a further volume. Now, in *Holism and Evolution*, there is nothing beyond 'Personality' - or, at least, he cannot say that there is anything beyond this 'holistic evolutionary development.' Yet, it seems that he cannot preclude this either; he writes 'a scale of wholes forms the ladder of Evolution' (Smuts, 1927:110), and that 'It is through a continuous and universal process of whole-making that reality rises step by step, until from the poor, empty, worthless stuff of its humble beginnings it builds the spiritual world beyond our greatest dreams' (Smuts, 1927:110). In any case, whatever such a further development might be, Smuts neither locates it out of nature nor in an 'ethical institution,' such as society or the state.

In *Holism and Evolution*, then, 'holistic creative evolution' culminates in Personality, and one sees some key characteristics of wholes in Smuts's account of it - specifically, that such wholes exhibit or lead to purposiveness, individuality, and freedom.

Holism exhibits purposiveness: as 'a special form of that unified organic action .... It means a correlation and unification of actions towards an end, whether this is consciously conceived or apprehended or not' (Smuts, 1927:147). There

is, then, a tendency to unity, a kind of teleology, and even progress (and not just change) in reality, though Smuts does not see this as entirely determined (Smuts, 1927:319); for 'what above all is inherited is freedom' (Smuts, 1927:283).

Holism also promotes 'individuality.' Smuts writes that holism 'is the principle which works up the raw material or unorganised energy units of the world, utilises, assimilates and organises them, [and] endows them with specific structure and character and individuality' (Smuts, 1927:110). This move to individuality is characteristic throughout reality - 'through things and plants and beasts and men' (Smuts, 1927:110) - and is a product of evolution (Smuts, 1927:241-242; 284-285). It is a value, and it is essential to what is valuable.

Third, Smuts writes that wholes are 'free' - that 'the concept of freedom is rooted in that of the whole' (Smuts, 1927:126) - and that, 'to realise wholeness or freedom (they are correlative expressions) in the smaller whole of individual life represents not only the highest of which the individual is capable, but expresses also what is at once the deepest and the highest in the universal movement of Holism' (Smuts, 1927:321). Liberty or freedom is the 'supreme prize' of every human being, and is necessary for the 'inward self-determination of the Personality' (Smuts, 1927:323).

These characteristics of Smuts's holism are also characteristics of an idealist philosophy, as I have argued elsewhere (Sweet, 2024). Admittedly, some of these characteristics may not seem to fit easily with certain idealisms; Smuts believes that an absolute idealism, such as he finds in Hegel (Smuts, 1927:90), does not leave room for creativity, emergence, contingency, or freedom, and that it adopts a 'mechanistic' approach, where there is a kind of 'logical unfolding' of the absolute in space and time (Smuts, 1927:90). But, as I have argued, other idealisms arguably can allow for both a broad mechanistic approach with an 'impulse to unity' and, at the same time, exhibit 'creative freedom' (Bosanquet, 1913:5, 73). Again, Smuts, like many idealists, holds an 'organic' metaphysical view; that there is a progress

towards an ultimate spirit (Smuts, 1927:110) or absolute; and that this process is 'a process of... self-perfection within a larger Whole' (Smuts, 1927:353). One finds this particularly in some personal idealists such as Ward and Pringle-Pattison. Again, in earlier work, Smuts seems to hold that 'there is something below the phenomena of the semblant world' or 'some underlying reality' (Smuts, 1973:129) – which reflects a position held by many, if not all, of the idealists of the period. In short, in both Smuts's holism and some idealist views, individuality is tied closely to self-realisation, and there is no opposition between individuality and community. Thus, individuality and community are not only consistent but mutually reinforcing; freedom is not 'license,' but reflects and presupposes a principle of order; and there is a purposive character to reality.

These characteristics, particularly individuality and freedom, are not only key concepts in political philosophy, but bear on Smuts's political philosophy in particular.

Political philosophy

Smuts says little, if anything, explicitly concerning political philosophy in *Holism and Evolution*. Yet, given that his account was to be, at the very least, descriptive of reality, it is no surprise that he introduces theories and concepts that bear on the political. Moreover, given his emphasis on Personality as the highest stage of the process of holism, he must also address, at some point, how to promote the development of Personality, how to support Personality, and how persons relate - and should relate - to other persons.

In *Holism and Evolution*, two central themes that bear on political philosophy come to the fore: individuality and freedom. I will, moreover, mention a third theme, only briefly adverted to in *Holism and Evolution*, and that is the state.

a) Individuality

For Smuts, individuality is 'inherent in the holistic process' (Smuts, 1927:241), both externally and internally. Smuts

writes that only wholes are individuals; 'individuality is distinctive of wholes' (Smuts, 1927:147). Further, to be an individual is: to have (1) 'a real character, a unique identity, and an irreversible orientation which distinguishes it from everything else' (Smuts, 1927:147); (2) to be 'unified,' as 'a system of co-ordinated structures and functions' (Smuts, 1927:218); and (3) given the creative - and not mechanistic - character of evolution, to be 'free.'

But, just as there are different kinds of wholes, there are different kinds of individuality. Moreover, the more wholeness, the more individuality. Smuts explains: 'More wholeness not only means a deeper, more intensive individuality in the Self, but also a more perfect order in the structure of Reality' (Smuts, 1927:251). There is also a normative element here. Smuts writes that 'this character of individuality rises with the rise of wholes in the scale of Evolution, and acquires decisive importance at the ultimate level of human Personality.' (Smuts, 1927:147). This suggests that individual persons have utmost value.

But this emphasis on individuality is not individualism. While individuality is fundamental and a characteristic of wholes, the development of the whole and of the individual is only in and through others; 'wholes and parts mutually and reciprocally influence and modify each other' (Smuts, 1929:640). Wholes themselves also reciprocally influence one another (Smuts, 1927:342); specifically, 'it is the intermingling of fields [described above] which is creative or causal in nature as well as life', and it is that by which 'a thing or event transcends its apparent limits' (Smuts, 1927:18). While the wholes, then, are independent and mutually exclusive, this overlap of their respective fields 'create[s] an entirely new situation. Thus, we speak of the atmosphere of ideas, the spirit of a class, or the soul of a people. The social individuals as such remain unaltered, but the social environment or field undergoes a complete change' – and this is a 'higher creation' (Smuts, 1927:100).

Again, Smuts argues that the 'individualistic' will requires rational and ethical restriction. It 'has to be harmonised and through effort and struggle to be adjusted to higher ethical and spiritual ends and ideals' (Smuts, 1927:252). There are ethical implications of this. (1) While an individual is unique, it is - and must be - related to others - for example, we have an 'inheritance from our parents and ancestors' (Smuts, 1927:271) - and, moreover, 'the individual becomes conscious of himself only in society' (Smuts, 1927:234). (2) As it realises itself, the individual also contributes to others; 'The newer, deeper Self becomes the centre for a fresh ordering and harmony of the universal' (Smuts, 1927:252). Thus (3), to speak of 'Pure individualism is a misleading abstraction' (Smuts, 1927:234).

Smuts's emphasis on the individual and on the person is clearly relevant to political philosophy and to the relation of the individual to society and the state - that the individual person has a fundamental value and role, and yet is inseparable from relations to others. Interestingly, this emphasis reflects a view that one also finds in Ward and other personal idealists - that there is an overall principle of reality, that individuals are real, but that individuals cannot be understood without this overall principle. One finds this idealist character expressed vividly in Smuts's foreword to a book by F.C. Kolbe that was perhaps the most extensive response to Smuts's *Holism and Evolution*. Smuts underlines this relation of individuals to one another and to a larger whole: 'The popular view of the finite particular or 'thing' I show to be a false abstraction... Holism by its very nature denies reality to the particular by itself and in itself and apart from the context of its field' (Kolbe, 1928:vii-viii). Still, Smuts reminds the reader that 'The finite endures in the communion of the infinite' (Kolbe, 1928:vii).

(b) Freedom

As one can see from the above, connected with individuality is freedom. Smuts makes freedom an inherent character of the universe; 'Freedom has its roots deep down in the foundations and the constitution of the universe' (Smuts, 1927:316).

Indeed, it is implicit in evolution. For Smuts, evolution, recall, is creative. And even at the level of matter and inorganic structures, one can not only speak of the development of wholes, but of a *kind* of freedom in the process, i.e., contingency - though, strictly speaking, freedom is only at the level of mind, and beyond.

From matter, through life, to Mind, what one finds, Smuts writes, is that 'external determination is transformed by the whole into self-determination or freedom' (Smuts, 1927:126, 145). At the level of Mind, Mind gradually comes to control 'its own conditions of life' (Smuts, 1927:235). And 'at the human stage' - 'on the level of human personality' - 'freedom takes conscious control of the process and begins to create the free ethical world of the spirit' (Smuts, 1927:127), bringing about what Smuts calls a 'new ideal world of spiritual freedom' (Smuts, 1927:234).

But, Smuts writes, this freedom is not random or voluntaristic. For (1), as noted earlier with the development of wholes, 'the new always arrives in the bosom of the pre-existing structure'; (2) this freedom is rational and ordered, for 'Mind [is also] a part of the universal order' (Smuts, 1927:238); and, (3) freedom involves restraint; holism can be, as it were, 'inhibitive' (Smuts, 1927:192, 224). Smuts states that 'Holism is not merely creative of variations, but just as much repressive of variations. ... it holds in check certain features while it releases and pushes forward others' - a view that Smuts finds ignored in Darwinism (Smuts, 1927:192; cf 224).

All wholes, all individuals, then, have freedom in some sense. But when it comes to the level of personality, what is most relevant is not an independence from others in an external sense, but what occurs in internal life. (Hence, Smuts's reference, in *Walt Whitman: A Study in the Evolution of Personality*, to the personalities and character of Goethe and Whitman and, in *Holism and Evolution*, to figures such as Shakespeare [Smuts, 1927:297].) Freedom is, as noted above, not a 'capricious power peculiar to the will' (Smuts, 1927:300),

but means 'holistic self determination' (Smuts, 1927:317). It is essential to self-realisation.

This freedom, freedom of the individual, clearly bears on Smuts's political philosophy. While it is, at basis, a moral and a psychological freedom, the individual must have a freedom to act, to associate, and to pursue the good, all of which involve others. Yet, it is not an absolute freedom; Smuts is not endorsing license. This, then, requires an appreciation of how Smuts understands the state (and, more broadly, values), and the relation of the individual to the state.

(c) The state

Smuts makes only two or three references to the term 'the state' in all of *Holism and Evolution*. He explains there that the state is a human association, an association of persons. Yet he adds that it exists at a level higher than personality and has, 'for its higher purpose, the fostering and spiritual development of this ... whole of personality.' Specifically, the state offers an organisation beyond what the individual person can accomplish. So, in the state, 'central control becomes super individual' (Smuts, 1927:109).

Smuts refers to the state, then, as being a whole, 'in a sense' (Smuts, 1927:100). But Smuts also says that, even though it is a structure on the analogy, and with many of the properties, of wholes, the state is not a real whole. It is, rather, what he calls a 'group field' (Smuts, 1927:348). What he means by this is that while wholes - e.g., persons - are distinct from one another and (as noted earlier) 'may be mutually exclusive, their fields overlap and penetrate and reinforce each other, and thus create an entirely new situation.... [with] a multiplication of force,' and can lead to the creation of a 'common field' (Smuts, 1927:348). (The 'common' or 'group field' may, perhaps, be seen as a set of dominant ideas or a general will.[23]) It is this 'mutual penetration and overlap' 'which creates the appearance and much of the reality of a new organism.' And so we can speak of 'the atmosphere of ideas, the spirit of

23 See note 22.

a class, or the soul of a people.' But we can also, at a certain level, speak of 'social or group or national organisms' (Smuts, 1927:348). Strictly speaking, however, recall that Smuts holds that, 'as a matter of fact there is no new organism; the society or group is organic without being an organism; holistic without being a whole.' Moreover, 'The group field is so to say the multiplication of all the individual fields....We have in such cases an organic situation but not an organism.' As noted earlier, 'Groups, families, churches, societies, nations are organic but not organisms' (Smuts, 1927:348).

The state is, therefore, a product of the whole-making power of human individuality; 'we are members one of another' (Smuts, 1929:643). It also has normative force - perhaps like a 'general will' - for, as such a 'group field,' a state has control - indeed, appropriate control - over the individual. That being said, since the state is not a whole, the state must or ought leave room for an individual's creativity. It has, 'for its higher purpose, the fostering and spiritual development of this supreme whole of personality' (Smuts, 1929:643). Smuts certainly does not see the state as ultimate.

It would seem that the relation of the individual to the state, then, is the relation of a whole within a larger order. Here, the individual whole can be creative, emergent, and free. The individual, therefore, is in a way undetermined but, in a way, not. Smuts recognises that structures can, and should, inhibit the individual, and, as we have seen, there is a 'vast plan of extensive coordination' amongst them (Smuts, 1927:250). Still, the function of this structure is 'to foster little centres of intensive wholeness in individuals' which reflects the 'individualistic nature of mind' and to ensure that 'individuation is part of the holistic advance' (Smuts, 1927:251).

Specifics on the nature and form of such an association as the state are not given; not surprisingly, terms such as democracy do not appear in *Holism and Evolution*, and the state is not unique as a group field. (There is also, as we have seen, 'the atmosphere of ideas,' and 'families, churches and

nations.') Yet, while there is no account of the nature and form of the state in *Holism and Evolution*, or of its relation to other 'group fields,' certain features of the state are evident.

First 'Reason' has a role**.** Smuts writes 'Reason is the organ of universality…' (Smuts, 1927:252); it is 'largely creative of the new structures of reality and truth' (Smuts, 1927:252). Order is essential. Smuts writes: 'There is the holistic order' (Smuts, 1927:344), and 'Reason becomes the basis of the new order in the universe' (Smuts, 1927:252). Second, whatever is regulative in such situations seems to be 'dialectical.' For example, recall Smuts's view of the reciprocal and mutual relation of wholes and parts, and of wholes to each other, in the development of wholes. Third, it seems as though values also have a role in 'limiting' the state for, beyond the state, there are 'the ideal wholes, or holistic ideals, or absolute values' such as 'Truth, Beauty, and Goodness' (Smuts, 1927:109). Finally, this emphasis on individuality and freedom suggests a basic political pluralism in Smuts's view. (This also seems implied in Smuts's effort of preserving individuality within the state.) While Smuts rejects some metaphysical pluralisms, such as the 'spiritual pluralism' or spiritualism of James Ward (Smuts, 1927:327, 343)[24], he nevertheless appears to endorse something of the kind in his early book on Whitman [Smuts, 1973:129].) In other words, Smuts may be open to a pluralism that seeks to protect individuality, but which is not reducible to individualism. Thus, a plurality may be consistent with holism.

Overall, however, at the root of Smuts's account of the state is freedom. Smuts takes up the discussion of freedom in his Rectoral address at the University of St Andrews in 1934. Here, Smuts is aware of the increasing militarisation of Europe, and, although he has a somewhat positive - but, as it turned out, far too optimistic - view that war will be averted, he is insistent that freedom is essential to combat it. Although he does not explicitly mention *Holism and Evolution* in this

24 For his discussion of Ward's views in *The Realm of Ends* (1911), see Smuts, 1927:289-291, 343.

lecture, he does focus on 'creative freedom' (Smuts, 1934:35) - which, in *Holism and Evolution*, he describes as 'the essence of Personality' (Smuts, 1927:300) and here, in this address, as 'the watchword of the new order' (Smuts, 1934:35). Creative freedom involves, first, 'inner freedom and harmony of soul' (Smuts, 1934:35). It also involves 'intellectual freedom' and 'political freedom' (Smuts, 1934:29), by which he includes freedom of conscience, speech, thought, and teaching; this is 'liberty in its full human meaning' (Smuts, 1934:30). Finally, he refers to 'international freedom' (Smuts, 1934:35), by which he means 'the rule of peace and justice' throughout the world which may presumably be preserved by an 'international order' (Smuts, 1934:22) - perhaps by a League of Nations.[25] He sees these freedoms as being opposed to the 'absorption of the individual by the state' (Smuts, 1934:31), and he situates himself against authoritarian or totalitarian regimes - what he sometimes refers to as 'Prussianism' - which restrict private rights and civil liberties.

In general, then, Smuts emphasises that freedom is natural and necessary to self-realisation and to peace. Smuts writes that 'Freedom is the most ineradicable craving of human nature' (Smuts, 1934:32) and says that 'without it, peace, contentment, and happiness... are not possible' (Smuts, 1934:32); freedom is 'what is deepest in our spiritual nature' (Smuts, 1934:33), and is opposed to what one might call the 'unfreedom' of a 'materialist mechanist civilization' (Smuts, 1934:33).

There is, Smuts acknowledges here, a need for the state, but the state must have as its foundation the individual, social freedom, and equality; he writes that 'the individual is basic to any world order that is worthwhile' (Smuts, 1934:26) and that 'social freedom and equality before the law [serve] as the foundation of the State' (Smuts, 1934:35). This echoes his remarks, earlier, in *Holism and Evolution*, where he notes that the importance of the individual is marked by the presence of

25 See, for example, Smuts (1918), and his arguments in Smuts (1930, esp. Ch 5). See also Heyns and Gravett (2017).

dignity - of 'dignity' in the law (Smuts, 1934:292), but also the 'spiritual dignity' and 'sacredness' of the person (Smuts, 1927:292).[26]

One might well ask what the implications are of such an account of the state. Does Smuts suggest the kind of state or the kind of policies such a state might undertake? Interestingly, in his writings of the 1930s, Smuts is somewhat cautious about democracy. He notes that democratic institutions have been under attack (Smuts, 1930:152), that the public is increasingly indifferent to the political process (Smuts, 1930:160), and that the 'machinery of democracy' (Smuts, 1934:32) calls for reform. He finds 'continental democracy' weak (Smuts, 1934:27) - no doubt because of the rise of fascism and communism in several countries - and that democracy has not been able to keep its 'promise of international peace' (Smuts, 1934:18). Nevertheless, in his book on Walt Whitman (Smuts, 1973:137-157) and in his 1929 Sidgwick Memorial Lecture, 'Democracy,'[27] he provides a sustained defence of democracy, arguing that no better alternative as a basis of government has presented itself (Smuts, 1930:153), and that the 'active co-operation of the governed in their government still holds the field as the first axiom of political philosophy' (Smuts, 1930:153).[28] It is simply, however, that 'Society is in

26 It is worth noting that Smuts wrote much of the Preamble to the United Nations Charter of 1945 and was reportedly responsible for the insertion of the term "human rights" in the Charter. Moreover, according to Charles Malik, who was a member of the committee of the Commission on Human Rights that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the term 'dignity' was inserted in the Charter at the suggestion of Smuts. See the remarks in the John Peters Humphrey diaries, entry for October 6, 1948, cited in Hobbins (1991:155). (Humphrey had been the Secretary of the Commission on Human Rights.) See also Humphrey (1983:427).

27 Smuts's Sidgwick Memorial Lecture was delivered at Newnham College, Cambridge, on 30 November 1929. It appears in Smuts (1930).

28 Again, Smuts writes: "The consent of the governed is the only secure and lasting basis of government, and liberty is

its essence dynamic,' that 'our political institutions require continual reshaping' (Smuts, 1930:172), and that 'the methods of enabling the people to exercise in freedom their influence on government may have to be altered from those at present in vogue' (Smuts, 1934:32). What Smuts seems to have in mind, is having a more scientific and impartial level of administration that can avoid what we might call populism, i.e., 'both the organization and the functioning of the state should become more scientific, impartial, businesslike, and less purely political in the old sense' (Smuts, 1930:177).

At the base of Smuts's account of the state and of his critique of 'Prussianism,' is his emphasis on the person / individual. This emphasis is present, as noted earlier, in some idealist movements as well. While the personal idealists had little to say on political philosophy, their emphasis on the nature and value of the individual person is congenial with Smuts's political approach.[29] Again, given Smuts's emphasis on freedom and individuality, and, as noted above, 'dignity,' 'equality,' and the 'essential' (Smuts, 1930:30) or 'inalienable rights of human beings' (Smuts, 1927:292), one might well see Smuts as being, broadly, in the 'liberal and democratic' tradition (Hoernlé, 1935:395), though, arguably, not a liberal individualist tradition.

But this broad assignation has been challenged. There have been a number of recent critics, such as Peder Anker, Jeannie Morefield, and J.B. Foster, who have challenged the legitimacy of Smuts's liberal reputation, accusing him at times of a kind of a disingenuity, intellectual duplicity, or sleight

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the condition of consent." (Smuts, 1930:175).

29 Smuts does not refer to the major idealist philosophers, such as T.H. Green and Bernard Bosanquet, though copies of their books are to be found in his personal library, and he also corresponded with South African idealist political philosophers, such as A.R. Lord (and, as detailed below, R.F.A. Hoernlé). See letters from Lord in the National Archives, Pretoria, and the Smuts House Museum, Irene, and letters from Hoernlé in the Smuts letters, National Archives, Pretoria, and the *Historical Papers Research Archive*, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

of hand (Morefield, 2014:175). Smuts clearly did support segregationist views, though most scholars acknowledge that, politically, he was more moderate than the opposition National Party which, after Smuts's political defeat in 1948, instituted the policy of 'apartheid.' Still, one might ask whether Smuts's political practice and defence of segregation reflect principles of his holism. These recent critics claim that there is a connection. They draw little, however, on Smuts's philosophical works - and, to the extent that they do, they fail to cite texts that show a connection between holism and an illiberal view. Again, some suggest that there is a relation between Smuts's racial views and his idealism, although these authors read Smuts as adopting a kind of Hegelianism (Anker, 2001:44; Morefield, 2014:180-181) that Smuts, in fact, explicitly rejected. While these critics cite second-hand accounts of Smuts's policies or contemporary attacks on his character, again there appears to be no demonstrated relation to Smuts's holistic principles - and, so, whether the interpretations of these critics can be supported by a scholarly reading of Smuts's holism is an issue that is, at best, unresolved.

To discern and make some assessment of Smuts's political philosophy, it is useful to look at a contemporary of Smuts. Perhaps the most distinguished of those to challenge Smuts's political philosophy is R.F.A. Hoernlé.[30]

30 As noted above, Smuts was also criticised at the time by the Marxist biologist Lancelot Hogben (who briefly taught in South Africa, from 1927 to 1930). Although Hogben clearly found Smuts's politics objectionable, his criticism was more an attack on Smuts's putative vitalism and the implications for science than on his philosophical holism, and Hogben does not make any connection between Smuts's holism and racial issues. Similarly, while the English botanist Arthur Tansley also challenged Smuts, his focus was on the 'holism' of South African Professor J.F.V. Phillips - and here, too, it was more on the notion of teleology in nature than on matters related to race. (Tansley, 1935). It is a stretch, therefore, to conclude that "the naturalized hierarchy that constituted Smuts's theory of ecological holism gave

Hoernlé was a philosopher and well-schooled in idealism, although he was sympathetic to absolute rather than personal idealism. Hoernlé knew Smuts reasonably well. Early in his career (1905-08), Hoernlé taught at the South African College in Cape Town, and, after 1921 until his death in 1943, at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Hoernlé's wife, Agnes, was the daughter of a South African senator who worked with Smuts. Hoernlé and Smuts exchanged letters periodically for some decades,[31] and Hoernlé himself was a well-known figure in the movement for racial justice in South Africa. Hoernlé reviewed *Holism and Evolution* when it appeared in 1926. While he acknowledged that there was 'a certain measure of originality in holism' (Hoernlé, 1926:89), he did not see it as being particularly novel. Hoernlé made no comments on the social and political implications of the work.

Nevertheless, Hoernlé responded to Smuts's Rectoral address in a lecture at the University of the Witwatersrand, entitled 'Freedom in the Present-day World' (Hoernlé, 1935). There, Hoernlé presents a number of cautions about Smuts's 'prizing' of 'the liberal and democratic tradition' (Hoernlé, 1935:395). First, Hoernlé notes that Smuts's emphasis on the individual is ambiguous and that, as far as it goes, it goes too far. Hoernlé insists that individuality has value only if it is grounded or in 'the service of supra-individual values' (Hoernlé, 1935:397). Second, Hoernlé states that Smuts's emphasis on creative freedom needs to be clearer about what is being created, what exactly is this freedom, and what are the practical limits on freedom. Hoernlé notes that creative activity in itself is not supportive of freedom. He also emphasises that freedom is not an unconditioned value, and that, in any case, the exercise of freedom requires learning, discipline, truth, and a commitment to unity and coherence, ideally within a context of common convictions.

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seeming philosophical-scientific support to his racial views" (Foster, 2010a:318).

31 See note 29, above.

Given these general concerns, Hoernlé then raises the question of Smuts's account of the nature of political freedom. What, on Hoernlé's view, are the implication of Smuts's position? Hoernlé suggests, first, that Smuts is inconsistent by, on the one hand, favouring democracy for all, and, on the other, not 'attempting' - or feeling that he could not attempt - 'the solution of South Africa's great problem of the relations between Whites and Blacks' (Hoernlé, 1935:399). (Hoernlé returns to this point about 'liberalism' in South Africa, in his later work [e.g., Hoernlé, 1939 and 1945].) Speaking generally, Hoernlé notes that 'What none has done is to re-examine, in the light of the experience of a multi-racial society, like South Africa, what liberty means and how, if at all, it can be realized in that sort of society' (Hoernlé, 1945:xxxiv).

Second, Hoernlé emphasises the importance of reason, persuasion, and consent in democracy, and that, in order to promote toleration, there need to be pre-existing common civic loyalties. (One can see this emphasis on 'common convictions' and 'common civic loyalties' as an echo of the idealist view of the importance of shared dominant ideas or a general will and a common good, and that such a good is necessary to fleshing out both the description of creative freedom and the value of individuality.) It seems clear, then, that Hoernlé did not regard Smuts as providing a consistent and thorough-going liberal and democratic philosophy or, at least, a political philosophy that he, as a liberal and an idealist, would find acceptable. Hoernlé certainly values individuality and freedom, but would demur from Smuts's account and, indeed, similar accounts by personal idealists such as Ward and Pringle-Pattison, as he sees them to be incomplete.

Conclusion

There is good reason to hold that Smuts had a political philosophy and that one can find its foundations in *Holism and Evolution*. One can also see traces of this political philosophy in Smuts's earlier writings, for example, his book on Walt Whitman, but also in later writings, especially his Rectoral

address on freedom. While he did not write on political philosophy as such, core themes of 'the whole,' 'personality,' 'individuality,' and 'freedom' recur in his writings on, and his articulations of, holism, and his approach to these themes mirrors and, arguably, is influenced by, a philosophical idealism that influenced him throughout his life.

In this essay, I have argued that Smuts's holism, with its advocacy of Personality, offers an explanation of the existence, value, and the importance of freedom, individuality, and democracy. In particular, I have noted Smuts's view that 'wholes' have value, and that the more complete, less inconsistent, and integrated a whole, the more important it is. For Smuts, there is no greater whole than persons or personality, and this standard has a normative force.

While individuality is a fundamental feature of wholes, it is important to note that Smuts rejects individualism. Dignity and rights are, to be sure, to be ascribed to individual persons, but they are a product of the 'group fields' amongst persons. Still, while the state and other ethical and social institutions have a central role in the development of persons, they do not have a value above the person and, therefore, Smuts rejects any kind of statism or authoritarianism. Moreover, higher values, such as 'love, goodness' (Smuts, 1927:151), 'beauty and truth' (Smuts, 1927:110), have a central role in the limitation of the activity of the state. This political consequence is consistent, again, with the personal idealism that is reflected in Smuts's holism.

Many idealist authors of the period argued for a similar view, a view which is generally accepted as 'liberal.' And Smuts's political philosophy is, arguably, also a liberalism but - like that of many idealists - simply not a liberal individualism. Moreover, the importance of individuality, personality, and freedom - taking care to understand how these terms are used in Smuts's holism - leads to a state that Smuts describes as broadly democratic and, given his account of the role of the individual and his emphasis on freedom, also pluralistic. Smuts's holism, then, provides a ground for

a political philosophy in the idealist tradition. It remains to be determined, however, whether and, if so, how this political philosophy had a presence or resonance in Smuts's political practice.

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12. Father of Holism

The intellectual legacy of Jan Smuts

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Jan Smuts (1870-1950), the famous South African statesman, politician and military commander, also made intellectual contributions to society. There is disagreement as to whether these contributions were of such a nature that Smuts can be classified as an intellectual. His admirers have no doubt that he was an intellectual (Geyser, 2019:65). In contrast, his political opponents referred to him as *Slim Jannie* (Clever Johnny) (Armstrong, 1937:75), not to praise his intelligence, but to suggest that he was a cunning politician who could not be trusted. In scientific circles, Smuts's contributions were praised on the one hand, but criticised on the other. In the light of these opposing opinions, in this chapter I try to answer the question of whether Smuts can be classified as an intellectual and on which basis he deserves this status.

Smuts's intellect and interest in the sciences

That Smuts had a 'highly developed intellect' (Geyser, 2019:65) is confirmed by his record as a scholar and student. He went to school at the age of twelve but completed his schooling in a short time with great success. At the Victoria College in Stellenbosch, Smuts was a top student and, based on his academic performance, he obtained the Ebden scholarship, which enabled him to study law at Christ's College in Cambridge. There he excelled as a brilliant student and won the prestigious George Long Prize for his unparalleled academic achievements. He was later singled out by Lord Todd along with John Milton and Charles Darwin as one of the three

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outstanding students in the 500 years of Christ's College's history (Geyser, 2019:43, 47, 49-50).

Even Albert Einstein, the outstanding scientist of the early twentieth century, had praise for Smuts's intellect and considered him one of the few people who understood his theory of relativity. Smuts himself claimed to have 'thoroughly mastered' the theory. Einstein, impressed by Smuts's *Holism and Evolution*, forecast that the theories of relativity and holism would guide human thinking in the next millennium (Brush, 1984:291; Van Wyk, 2013; Geyser, 2019:43).

Smuts could have pursued an academic or legal career in England but decided not to continue with postgraduate studies in Cambridge and returned to South Africa. His political and military activities in the rest of his career prevented him from returning to academic studies. He did not acquire further formal qualifications but remained an 'eternal student' through his reading and interaction with scholars. He kept abreast of scientific advances and actively participated in the academic discourses of his time (Geyser, 2019:61-3).

Smuts was a scientist in his own right. His contact with botanists and his fieldwork and reading contributed to his becoming a leading expert on grasses, who enjoyed scientific recognition as a botanist. He identified new types of grass that were named after him, of which the *Smutsvingergras* (*Digitaria smutsii* Stent) is the most famous (Pieterse, 2019:114-26).

As a decision-maker in the government of the Transvaal Colony and later the Union of South Africa, Smuts was a promoter and patron of the sciences. Through his efforts, the Transvaal University College, forerunner of the University of Pretoria, came into being (Strydom, 2019:127-37). He was a member of various South African scientific associations, contributed to the scientific literature in speeches and forewords for publications and provided input to promote several academic disciplines at South African universities (Plug, 2016).

Smuts was therefore exceptionally intelligent, excelled academically, had a scientific mindset, participated in

scientific discourses and made significant contributions to the advancement of the sciences. To determine whether these characteristics made him an intellectual, it is necessary to first define the term 'intellectual' and determine which criteria an intellectual must meet.

What is an intellectual?

There is an age-old tradition of educated, intelligent persons who possess insight, wisdom and vision and participate in public discourses on societal issues. However, the term 'intellectual' only came into use at the end of the nineteenth century when Émile Zola and others in France criticised the state's handling of the Dreyfus affair and Georges Clemenceau used it as a noun for the first time (Brouwer & Squires 2006:34). In the course of the twentieth century, the term 'intellectual' acquired a predominantly positive meaning by associating it with persons who make positive contributions in the public sphere and act as the benefactors of humanity and mouthpieces for truth and justice (Hall, 1996:8; Baran, 1961; Ory & Sirinelli, 2002:10).

Intelligence, critical thinking and the ability to argue are characteristics of an intellectual but are not the only requirements which an intellectual must meet. Ongoing debates have been and continue to be held in philosophical and other scientific circles about the definition of an intellectual and the criteria that someone must meet to qualify as an intellectual.

There is a fair amount of consensus about certain characteristics of an intellectual. Public engagement in issues of general interest is a key characteristic of intellectuals. They help shape public opinion. Furthermore, an intellectual must possess profound knowledge, insight into the larger connections between the various aspects of human existence and future-oriented vision. Leading intellectuals are often generalists rather than specialists and can speak out on a variety of subjects. They must be critical, denounce injustice in society and provide practical solutions to societal issues

(Etzioni, 2006:1-2; Bullock & Trombley, 2000:433). Sartre (1946) typified intellectuals as the moral conscience of their time (see also Cohen-Solal, 1989:588-9; Scriven, 1993:119). Said's (1993) call for intellectuals to fearlessly speak the truth to those in power is well known. According to him, in the postcolonial situation, intellectuals should side with the dispossessed, the unrepresented and the forgotten. From the literature it is clear that the intellectual is more than just a particularly intelligent or well-read person ('man of letters') and also more than just a thinker. They are expected to challenge notions that are taken for granted (Fuller, 2013:12) and to provide the kind of intellectual leadership through which social change can be achieved (Jennings & Kemp-Welch, 1997:210).

Despite the consensus on certain essential characteristics of intellectuals, the discourse on the characteristics and functions of intellectuals reveals numerous differences of opinion. There is no consensus on what role academics as intellectuals should play in society (Jacoby, 1987). Furthermore, there are divergent views on how neutral an intellectual should be towards ideologies (Lenin, 1902; Ramos, 1982; Bauman, 1987:2; Furedi, 2004:32; Etzioni, 2006:3). Foucault (1980:126-33) and Lyotard (1993:3) argued that the traditional conception of the intellectual, as someone who makes statements about universal truths, has become obsolete in the postmodern era. There is also disagreement about whether the intellectual should be inside, outside or on the fringes of the establishment (Ramos, 1982; Bourdieu, 1991:656; Jennings & Kemp-Welch, 1997:1-2). In fact, there is no consensus on what exactly an intellectual is. There is so much variation in views about the intellectual that it is almost impossible to encompass all viewpoints in a single definition (Howe, 2006:71,72). Hall (1996:34) believes that the question 'What is an intellectual?' cannot be answered and is therefore meaningless.

In light of this elusiveness of the conception of the intellectual and in light of the fact that ideas about the intellectual are constantly being adapted to changing

circumstances, it is hardly possible to lay down a specific set of criteria to test the claim that Smuts was an intellectual. Nevertheless, in the following sections, an attempt will be made to measure up Smuts's contributions to certain of the identified characteristics of the intellectual, referred to above, by trying to answer the following two questions: Did Smuts make an original contribution to the public discourse of his time? Was his contribution well noted and did it make a significant impact on society in his own time and later?

Holism as Smuts's primary contribution to the public discourse

The claim that Jan Smuts can be classified as an intellectual revolves mainly around the concept of holism and its societal impact. The possibility that Smuts's written and oral contributions to the founding of the Union of South Africa, the British Commonwealth of Nations, the League of Nations and the United Nations may be interpreted as an intellectual input into twentieth century statecraft is a separate topic and is not pursued in this chapter.

Smuts is recognised as the father of the term 'holism', because it first appeared in print in 1926 in his book *Holism and Evolution* (Ansbacher, 1994:486-92; Du Plessis, 2016). When he was a student at Stellenbosch and Cambridge, decades before the publication of his book, Smuts's thinking on holism had already begun to take shape and over time found expression in written form in various texts, including *Walt Whitman: A Study in the Evolution of Personality* and *An Inquiry Into the Whole* (Du Toit, 2019:66; Geyser, 2019:51, 54-6, 58-9). However, it was not until the end of his first term as Prime Minister, after his South African Party lost the election in 1924 and he became Leader of the Opposition, that he found time to complete his book on holism in his study at *Doornkloof* in a few months. The author of the highly acclaimed biography of Smuts, Keith Hancock (1968:176), reports how Smuts completed the book of 140,000 words in a period of 29 weeks in 1924 and 1925. Three editions of *Holism and Evolution* were

published by Macmillan between 1926 and 1936. In 1961 Viking Press republished it. Over the years many reprints were issued. The text is still readily available in print and electronic format.

Smuts was of course not the first and only thinker to think about the idea of wholes. The roots of holistic thinking extend into the distant past in both Eastern and Western thought. Contemporaries of Smuts, including the physicists Einstein, Heisenberg and Schrödinger, also thought holistically. The well-read Smuts was up-to-date with the latest developments in the scientific thinking of his time, although he never claimed to be a professional scientist or philosopher. In developing his thinking about holism, he relied on a wide range of biological and physical scientists and philosophers, whose ideas he supplemented with his own careful personal observation. He read the works of Kant, Freud and Einstein and incorporated the ideas of scholars such as Spinoza, Hegel, Leibniz and Darwin into his own concept of holism in order to make a synthesis of the existing knowledge of his time (Brush, 1984:291-2; Dubow, 2008:57; Wahl, 2016; Du Toit, 2019:67-8; Heyns, 2019:81-4). Smuts was developing his holistic thinking in an era when a paradigm shift in scientific thinking from Newton's mechanistic world view to Einstein's theory of relativity took place and the realisation took hold that everything in the universe was more fluid and relative than previously believed. New knowledge about atoms and subatomic particles changed the concept of matter. The new view of the universe as a dynamic whole of parts, in which great cosmic processes unfold as incremental successive progressive steps in space and time, supplemented Smuts's holistic ideas.

Much has been written about the content of *Holism and Evolution* (see, amongst others, Hancock, 1968:178-88; Du Toit, 2019:69-76; Heyns, 2019:84-90). Here, the content of the book is not analysed in detail. The core of the matter is that in his book, Smuts attempted to explain the relationship between matter, life and spirit and that it was his conviction that holism was the co-ordinating principle and decisive force that unites these three things into a whole. In his view every

aspect of the entire universe was based on an innate tendency of parts to form stable wholes (Gatherer, 2010:3). For him, holism was the 'something more' that holds together all the elements of complex organisms (Du Plessis, 2016). Smuts (1926:329) explained that holism was the creative factor behind the progressive evolution from matter to life to spirit and ultimately the human personality. Smuts used holism in a metaphysical context, as an ontological phenomenon inherent in nature. Heyns (2019:94) points out that Smuts's holism constituted neither a scientific system nor a philosophical system, but in the area between science and philosophy reflected Smuts's way of thinking about reality, the basis of his worldview. Smuts himself referred to his book on holism as his 'creed' (Hancock, 1968:197). Du Toit (2019:66, 75-6) believes that Smuts did not succeed in solving the mystery of the universe by elucidating the union of matter and life and of body and spirit, but that his book is nevertheless a remarkable contribution. It demonstrated his intellectual power to grasp the essence of areas outside his own specialised fields of botany and politics, and his skills of observation and synthesis (Jörgenfelt & Partington, 2019:7). The idea of holism captured people's imagination (Thomson & Geddes, 1931).

Hancock (1968:176, 188, 189) emphasises that Smuts completed his book in a hurry in the limited time at his disposal. He himself regarded his study of holism as 'preliminary' and expected criticism from scientific circles. *Holism and Evolution* was nevertheless initially particularly well received. Scholars such as Arnold Toynbee, the famous English historian, and Friedrich Meyer-Abich, a German jurist and philosopher, publicly recommended Smuts's work (Geyser, 2019:63-4; Du Plessis, 2022). In his Gifford Lectures on the sciences and philosophy at the University of Glasgow, the famous British physician and physiologist J.S. Haldane assessed Smuts's book as a remarkable text of wide scientific and human understanding (cited in Brush, 1984:289). In scientific circles, the reaction to Smuts's book was predominantly positive and for a number of years holism was one of the big ideas that scientists wrote about (Curtis, 2011).

It was particularly those scientists who opposed the advance of reductionism who adopted the label of holism, which is the opposite of reductionism and holds that understanding a system can be done only as a whole and that not all properties of a system can be explained in terms of its constituent parts and their interactions (Gatherer, 2010:4).

Smuts's theory of holism was not applauded by all scientists of the 1920s. Critics identified a number of shortcomings in the book. Hancock (1968:192-6) shows that *Holism and Evolution* provoked criticism in philosophical and theological circles, and states that it was initially received too favourably and later criticised too sharply. According to Gatherer (2010:1, 4) Smuts failed to find disciples amongst practising biologists for whom his holism was a 'stillborn theory'.

That Smuts's ideas about the holistic personality and personology exerted significant influence on Anglo-American psychology cannot be denied. Holism had a long-lasting effect on personality theory (Shelley, 2008:89-109; Du Plessis & Weathers, 2022). Some of Smuts's contemporaries, for example Alfred Adler and Adolf Meyer, acknowledged the impact of holism on their approach to psychology and psychiatry. Adler described *Holism and Evolution* as 'the best preparation for Individual Psychology' (cited in Du Plessis, 2022). Meyer, referred to as 'the Dean of American Psychiatry', wrote to Smuts as a 'fellow-holist', to express his admiration and gratitude (Neill, 1980:460).

Smuts's influence in the development of Gestalt psychology is recognised by Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951), Barlow (1981), Gorten (1987) and Wulf (1998). The insight that the whole determines the parts, which contrasted with former assumptions that the whole is merely the total sum of its elements, was of particular relevance for the development of Gestalt psychology. Kurt Koffka, one of the founders of Gestalt psychology and author of the book *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*, expressed his interest in holism in a letter to Smuts. In response Smuts mentioned

that he was following developments in Gestalt psychology (Blanckenberg, 1951:159). Fritz Perls, co-founder of Gestalt therapy, was significantly influenced by Smuts's book and noted that Smuts's ideas complemented the holistic work of Kurt Goldstein, who wrote *The Organism: A Holistic Approach to Biology Derived From Pathological Data in Man.*

The impact of holism on psychology extended beyond Gestalt psychology. Barlow contends that it was adopted by 'all of the humanistic and existential psychologies' (cited in Back, 1973:1). *Ganzheitspsychologie*, developed by the second Leipzig School of Psychology, shifted its focus to holistic complexes and their transformations as the starting point for psychological examinations (Diriwächter, 2021:10-12). Both Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss founder of analytical psychology, and Roberto Assagioli, an Italian psychiatrist, publicly expressed their admiration for Smuts's book (Geyser, 2019:63-4; Du Plessis, 2022).

Smuts's reputation was boosted by the publication of *Holism and Evolution* and in the following years he received invitations to address scientific societies. The title in Hancock's (1968:220) biography of Smuts of the chapter on his successful lecture tours to Britain and the USA is 'Professor Jan Smuts of Oxford', alluding to his prestige in academic circles at the time. In 1929, he introduced the discussion on the nature of life at the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Cape Town. Two years later he addressed this organisation again about 'The scientific world picture of today' in front of a large audience in London. He was honoured to be elected president of the association. This was the peak of Smuts's scientific involvement (Hancock, 1968:234; Geyser, 2019:63).

A few years later, the luxury of devoting time to science came to an end for Smuts when his South African Party began negotiating a coalition with Hertzog's National Party in 1933. In 1934 the two parties merged, and Smuts was again included in the cabinet. In light of scientific advances Smuts later admitted that the content of *Holism and Evolution* was 'pre-

scientific' and had become 'practically antiquated'. He wished that he had the time to write an updated version and let the original version become 'antiquarian' (Beukes, 1989:70 cited in Du Plessis & Weathers, 2022:94). However, his political responsibilities in the rest of his life did not allow him to write his intended sequel to *Holism and Evolution*.

Kriek (2019:368-99) indicates how Smuts's holism was more than just a theoretical concept but had practical impact through his actions as a politician and statesman in devising political structures such as the Union of South Africa, the British Commonwealth, the League of Nations and the United Nations. Morefield (2014:172-90) argues that Smuts's holistic thinking underpinned his internationalist ideals and that the long-term influence of these ideals even extends beyond the British Commonwealth, the League of Nations and the United Nations to contemporary forms of informal Imperialism. Du Plessis and Weathers (2022:93) comment on Smuts's perception of the state:

[T]he Modern State should not be seen as a holistic unity or a holistic organism; they are merely aggregates of wholes (individuals), never more than the sums of its parts. Smuts called these types of organisations 'holoïds', which are mechanical and not organisms.

What is important for this chapter and will be traced in the following sections is what contribution Smuts's views made to public discourses in his own time and later.

Tansley and Smuts: the discourse of holism in the 1920s and 1930s

Differences of opinion about Smuts's conception of holism in his own time are a sign of wider scientific debates and especially the rivalry between the idealist and materialist approaches to science. Scientific idealism starts from the assumption that reality, as man knows it, is constructed by the human mind and is therefore essentially immaterial and is sceptical about the possibility of knowing anything independent of the human mind. In contrast, scientific

materialism starts from the assumption that matter is the fundamental constituent of nature and that all things, including things of the mind and consciousness, are the result of material interaction. This is related to physicalism, the view that everything that exists is essentially physical (Odendal & Gouws, 2010:436,701).

Idealists assumed that living things are essentially different from non-living things and argued that the origin of life must be attributed to a supernatural creation process. In contrast, materialists argued that living organisms are also material objects, cannot claim a special status, and are subject to the same processes that regulate all physical systems. Different variations of materialism have evolved. According to mechanistic materialists, living organisms function in a similar way to machines, they are subject to the laws of physics and should be investigated with the tools of physics and chemistry. Holistic materialists argue that complex systems are more than the sum of their individual parts. Dialectical materialists argue that complex systems are always changing due to the interplay of opposing forces within themselves and emphasise the dynamic nature of living organisms (Web Solutions, 2017).

Smuts's Christian-oriented religio-philosophical beliefs contributed to his idealistic outlook and his opposition to the materialistic approach, which at that time was becoming dominant in philosophy and science. The idea that life arises from matter because physical matter is animated by a transcendent spiritual element was not acceptable to him (Smuts, 1932:12-3. See also Anker, 2001:137-43). Smuts followed a teleological approach, which prioritised efficiency in creation. He identified holism as a universal principle and argued that evolution is a process that creates ever more complex wholes, and that nature moves in the direction of continuous improvement. The hierarchy of wholes, from lower to higher species, represents a series of progressions to greater perfection (Smuts, 1927:99, 213, 297-313).

When his ideas about holism became world famous with the publication of *Holism and Evolution* in 1926, Smuts was immediately in the middle of a dispute between the idealist and materialist approaches in the ecological sciences. The fame he had already acquired at that stage in the military and political fields contributed to increased public interest in his book. The response resulted in an intense dispute.

Other contemporary scientists shared Smuts's teleological-idealist view. The most prominent of them was Fredric Clements, famous American plant ecologist and pioneer in the study of the succession of vegetation, who considered biotic communities as complex organisms, tending towards harmony and stability. Clements developed an influential theory of botanical change towards a climax state, which aligned with Smuts's holistic views (Foster & Clark, 2008:325-8). Smuts enjoyed strong support amongst ecologists and botanists in South Africa, especially John Phillips (1932:51-70; 1935:488-502; 1954:114-5) and John Williams Bews (1925; 1931:1-15. See Anker, 2001:171-5).

Smuts and his supporters' teleological-idealist conception of ecological holism was fiercely opposed by scientists with a materialist point of view. At the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Cape Town in 1929, Smuts's opponent in a debate on the nature of life was Lancelot Hogben. He was a Marxist biologist who worked at the University of Cape Town, advocated mechanistic materialism and was dismissive of Smuts's view of holism (Hogben, 1930:289-316; Smuts et al., 1929; Hancock, 1968:190-2; Anker, 2001:122). Other opponents of Smuts were the British Hyman Levy (mathematician), H.G. Wells (author), Julian Huxley (biologist) and G.P. Wells (zoologist) (Levy, 1933; Wells, Huxley & Wells, 1934).

The most important opponent of the ecological ideas of Clements, Smuts, Phillips and Bews was the socialist Arthur Tansley, first president of the British Ecological Society and creator of the ecosystem concept. He resisted attempts to interpret evolutionary ecology in anti-materialist, teleological

terms. In 1935, Tansley wrote an article for the magazine *Ecology*, in which he challenged Clements, Smuts and Phillips. He criticised their teleological approach that ecological succession is inherently progressive and the notion that holism is the cause and effect of everything in nature (Tansley, 1935). In opposition, he developed his materialist-holistic ecosystem concept, which interprets ecology from the point of view of dialectical, interdependent, dynamic ecosystems and which would gain ground in the 1940s and replace Clements' climax theory as the leading paradigm in ecology (Foster & Clark, 2008:334 -40; Van der Valk, 2014:293; Anker, s.a.).

The sharpest criticism of Tansley and those who agreed with him was not so much directed against Smuts's view of nature, but against his racial views.

Smuts believed that certain races evolved further than others. In his book he attributed the differences between races to natural inequalities (Smuts, 1926:297-313). In 1929 he argued in his Rhodes Lectures at Oxford that the superior European culture in Africa had come into contact with primitive cultures, whose members were childlike, content with a simple way of life, and lacking the European drive for progress and civilisation. Smuts argued that protective segregation was necessary in a country like South Africa to protect the cultures and traditions of Africans from being engulfed by the more developed cultures of the white population and to prevent blood mixing, help maintain racial purity, eliminate racial conflict and ensure a healthy society (Smuts, 1930:30-1, 33, 75-78, 92-93).

Some of Smuts's critics directly related his racial views to his hierarchical, teleological conception of ecology. They argue that he used holism and the outdated recapitulation theory, which underpinned nineteenth century biological racism, as a philosophical-scientific justification for a racial hierarchy, segregation and the treatment of black people in South Africa like children and their exploitation and oppression (Anker, 2001:191; Foster & Clark, 2008:329-31). By doing so, according to certain critics, he undid the valuable insights that were

locked up in the concept of holism (Foster, Clark & York, 2010:335; Rothenberg, 2003:321; Curtis, 2011).

This kind of criticism of Smuts's holism is one-sided. There is disagreement about how Smuts's holistic ideas and his racial views can be related to each other. Garson (2007:154-61,175) disagrees with the arguments of Marks (2001), Anker (2001) and Dubow (2008) that Smuts's holistic ideas were also reflected in his racial conceptions and the political practice of his racial policy. According to him, Smuts in *Holism and Evolution* did not refer to race at all and therefore, rather than interpreting his racial policy as an outgrowth of holism, his racial thinking must be assessed in the context of his public and political life.

The claim that Smuts developed holism as a deliberate scheme for racial oppression is far-fetched because he began to develop his holistic ideas long before he became involved in racial policy as a politician. The debate about the extent to which Smuts can be considered a racist is a separate theme, which is not relevant here. That Smuts's alleged racism renders his concept of holism worthless is obviously a fallacy and fails to discredit holism.

Smuts's involvement in the academic debate between idealist and materialist-oriented scientists continued into the early 1930s. In his presidential speech before the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1931, for example, he attacked the physicist John Tyndall's materialism (Smuts, 1932:10). Not long after, the scientific interlude in Smuts's career, in which the publication of and response to *Holism and Evolution* was the key moment, was over and his full attention was claimed by his political role in the Hertzog cabinet. In the further debates about the concept of holism, which are analysed in the next section, Smuts would not participate personally. These debates continue to this day, many decades after Smuts's death.

Smuts's legacy: the continuing discourse on holism

After the Smuts-Tansley dispute, holism enjoyed less prominence for several decades, although Hancock (1968:192) writes that from the mid-1950s it provoked renewed interest amongst philosophers. Since the 1980s, however, holism has come to the fore again and figures at the centre of science discourses. The development of computer technology has made it possible to process data on a previously unprecedented scale. The explosion of knowledge gave birth to new fields of scientific inquiry, such as systems theory and complexity studies, which advocated a holistic approach. Scientists from various disciplines realised that it was not possible to understand complex systems reductionistically by simply analysing their constituent parts in isolation, but that a holistic approach was required (Davies, 1992:78).

Echoes of Smuts's holistic thinking sounded in philosophical terminology. Arthur Koestler, the Hungarian-born British author-philosopher, argued that the 'old hat' of holism had the potential to produce 'lively rabbits'. In an attempt at an integrative philosophy of science he coined the term 'holon' in his book *The ghost in the machine*. It signified in a similar fashion as Smuts's book half a century earlier that every entity is at the same time an entity on its own and a hierarchical part of a larger whole in the great chain of being. Koestler viewed it as a concept that could form the basis for a holistic future scientific worldview. The holon concept and its associated theory is regarded as having the potential to play a crucial role in the movement to combine and synthesise scientific and cultural knowledge about psychological and social realities (Edwards, n.d.). Ken Wilber, a leading contemporary thinker, who was also significantly influenced by Smuts's holism, borrowed Koestler's concept of holons when he developed integral theory. It is a synthetic metatheory aimed at unifying a broad spectrum of theories and models within a singular conceptual framework. Wilber (1980:3) starts the prologue of *The Atman Project: A Transpersonal View of Human Development* with a synopsis of Smuts's concept of holism and then states that modern psychology discovered

that in the human psyche the same hierarchical arrangement of wholes within wholes, reaching from the simplest and most rudimentary to the most complex and inclusive can be found.

J.C. Poynton (1987:188), a zoologist, looked back on Smuts's contribution sixty years after *Holism and Evolution* was first published and concluded that holism was still a respected concept in scientific debates. According to him, Smuts was ahead of his time, and it took decades before the idea of holism came into its own. He wrote:

> Holistic thinking (in a broad sense) is currently aligned with systems theory in opposition to reductionist approaches ... Smuts's process-orientated, hierarchical view of nature, and his non-preformationist, unified interpretation of inorganic and organic evolution, has provided a rallying point for revolts against reductionism.

Jörgenfelt and Partington (2019:2) agree that the increasing popularity of the word 'holism' indicates 'a general striving in a rising number of scientific fields to reduce the influence of reductive research models and replace them with non-linear systems-based structures'.

Holism was one of the roots from which systems science grew. Von Bertalanffy (1971), the creator of general systems theory, argued already at the beginning of the 1970s that nothing in nature can be studied in isolation, but that everything, even human action, is connected to each other as part of a larger system. Systems scientists recognise holism as a basic concept (Umsbach, 2000:1; International Society for the Systems Sciences s.a.). *Holism and Evolution* was revisited at a systems sciences seminar in the 1990s, 70 years after its publication. At that seminar Benking (1997) pointed out that some fields of science still acknowledged the value of Smuts's theory of holism but regretted that others neglected it. He appealed for new studies and discussions about the original theory of holism and said that 'the works of Smuts when looking at them anew today make much sense, especially as Smuts was trying to bring together the physiosphere,

biosphere, and noosphere into one design'. In the *Holistic Science Journal* (s.a.), the creative relationship between whole and parts, as in Smuts's conception almost a century ago, is considered to be the core of holistic science. Whole and parts are not possible without each other. The whole comes about through the parts and the parts represent the whole. There is dynamic interaction between whole and parts.

Over the past decades, holism has been increasingly involved in academic debates in various fields. This includes natural and applied sciences, such as physics, physiology, neurobiology, ecosystem ecology, cybernetics and medical sciences, but also humanities such as anthropology and psychology (Du Plessis, 2016). The work of famous scientists in different fields of research found connection with Smuts's holistic thinking. Amongst the most famous are Paul Davies (physicist, see Davies, 1989), Ilya Prigogine (chemist, see Prigogine & Stengers, 1984), Rupert Sheldrake (biologist), Michael Polanyi (physical chemist, economist, philosopher) and Arthur Zajonc (physicist) (Heyns, 2019:95-8; Wahl, 2016). In the field of the environmental sciences, Smuts's holistic views exerted influence on Arne Naess, the Norwegian founder of deep ecology (Foster & Clark, 2008:341), his follower, Fritjof Capra's (1996:6-8) concept of the 'web of life' and James Lovelock's (1979) Gaia hypothesis. Holism also found expression in the religion-science conversation (Heyns, 2019:105-12). It is the contention of Jörgenfelt and Partington (2019:2,8,17) that Smuts's original theory of holism has not been falsified and that further scientific advances may in future validate his perception of reality. Du Plessis (2022) regrets that Smuts's theory of holism has not received the acknowledgement it deserves for its significant contribution as a key progenitor of contemporary integral metatheory, which attempts to integrate all human wisdom into a comprehensive worldview by combining multiple theoretical perspectives.

Besides the influence of holism on scientific theory, it has also found practical application in, amongst other things, philosophical counselling (Du Plessis, 2022; Du Plessis & Weathers, 2022), holistic medicine, which approaches healing

as an integrated process of body, mind and spirit (Freeman, 2005:154; Lawrence & Weisz, 1998), business practice (Visser, 1995; Olson & Eoyang, 2001) and holistic natural resource management (Van Wyk, 2016a). In *The wholeness principle*, Anna Lemkow (1990) gave an overview of the deployment of holistic thinking in science, religion and society.

Holism remains a key concept in scientific thought. Daniel Christian Wahl (2016), a biologist who focuses on whole system design, traced how holistic thinking as a counter to the reductionist-mechanistic-materialist approach gained traction in holistic science and complexity theory. He views holism as an integrative perspective, which accommodates different perspectives in a flexible and inclusive meta-worldview, which can be used as an overview tool for intellectual integration and an explanatory principle, and which can contribute to sustainable societies.

In 2016, Claudius van Wyk (2016b), an expert in the field of holistic science, re-evaluated Smuts's contribution in *Holism and Evolution*, 90 years after it appeared. He portrays Smuts as an active participant in the transition to a new scientific paradigm early in the twentieth century, who with his opposition to the mechanistic-reductionist model contributed to a transformed holistic view of science that recognised the complexity of reality. For this contribution, Smuts was recognised in scientific circles. Van Wyk draws parallels between Smuts's book in 1926 and new approaches in physics and philosophical thought. He concludes that Smuts's concept of holism should be seen as part of the move towards a postmodern perspective; that it laid the foundation for the emergence of general systems theory, and that it remains a valid epistemological approach as a counter to the materialistic paradigm.

Dalene Heyns (2019:78, 93-8, 111-2) argues in the same vein that Smuts was ahead of his time in his holistic thinking and that this is confirmed by the fact that his theories still resonate in different fields of knowledge to this day. Although Smuts's formulation of holism at the time is no

longer considered adequate today in the light of all the new knowledge that has been produced in the meantime, it remains a valid concept to explain and understand reality. She states:

> One is amazed at the imagination of this extraordinary man who was so far ahead of his time. What was not yet available to him by way of scientific knowledge, he sensed intuitively and as he delved into his imagination he used his visionary insight to predict the path of future development. Amazingly, without the help of a laboratory, computer and co-workers, he had the courage to develop his ideas and put them down in writing so that his theory still takes its place today in the advancement of various schools of thought.

Collected data in the field of chaos theory, a branch of mathematics, confirms that underlying patterns can be identified in the seemingly random nature of complex systems and that Smuts's intuition guided his thinking about wholes in the right direction (Kauffman, 1993, 1995).

Conclusion

I return to the two questions posed here as criteria for Smuts's claim to be classified as an intellectual.

Did Smuts make an original contribution to the public discourse of his time? There is no doubt that this was the case. Smuts thought deeply about the abstract and philosophical over a long period of time and *Holism and Evolution* was the product of his original thinking. In it he reveals himself as a seeker of the deeper underlying truth of what is in reality visible on the surface of nature and society. With holism, Smuts succeeded in exposing another dimension of truth. He establishes a framework of thought, which, admittedly, limps from a flawed empirical foundation and fails to bridge the gap between matter and spirit but serves as a stimulating starting point for further thought and investigation to better understand the universe.

Has Smuts's contribution been thoroughly noted, and did it make a significant impact on society in his own time and later? Because of the international fame that Smuts gained as a politician-statesman, there was extraordinary public interest in *Holism and Evolution*. In scientific circles, his holistic view placed him in the middle of the dispute between the idealist and materialist approaches. The Tansley-Smuts debate, at a time when a move towards a new scientific paradigm was taking place, but when a strong empirical basis had not yet been established in the ecological and other sciences, demonstrated that both Smuts and Tansley were seekers towards a new holistic perspective on reality. Foster and Clark (2008:311, 312, 316, 344) show that the two approaches to holism, represented by them, have moved closer together in the ecological sciences since the 1990s. They believe that they should be used as complementary rather than opposing approaches in an overarching realist-constructionist model.

Smuts is widely recognised in scientific circles as the pioneer of holistic thinking. In this chapter it has been shown that the impact of his holistic thinking was not limited to the 1920s and 1930s but has been revived since the 1980s as a starting point for the systems science approach. The increasing trend towards holistic thinking in the sciences makes it seem that Einstein's prediction that relativity and holism would be the most important scientific concepts in the new millennium has come true.

Both questions can therefore be answered unequivocally positively. In the light of that, I conclude that Smuts can be considered an intellectual, who made a constructive contribution to the public discourses of the twentieth and even the twenty-first centuries.

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13. Jan Smuts and the Atomic Bomb

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The life and legacy of Jan Christiaan Smuts continue to elicit widespread academic and political interest. However, a neglected aspect of Smuts's career relates to the atomic bomb and the emergence of the atomic age. During World War II, South Africa's rich uranium resources drew the attention of Britain and other states as the Allied powers became aware of Germany's atomic programme. In 1944, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill approached Smuts to compile an inventory of South Africa's uranium as Allied powers scrambled to build the ultimate weapon. Uranium deposits in South Africa were reported in the 1920s and confirmed significant uranium resources.

Smuts's intellect, and his extensive scientific interests and vigour is clear from, for example, his own writings, and scholarship on him. Smuts was a polymath and read widely. His scientific interests were widely recorded. In addition to this, Smuts also served on scientific bodies. He was, for example, the President of the British Association for the Advancement of Sciences. Pertinent to this chapter, Smuts's own writings displayed an understanding of Physics, the Theory of Relativity and Quantum Theory (Smuts, 1926; 1932). The chapter addresses a neglected aspect of Smuts's life and political career as Prime Minister (1919-1924 and 1939-1948) and international statesman, i.e., Smuts's role in the development of the atomic bomb during World War II and the use of the bomb on Japan on 6 and 9 August 1945. Although the chapter provides a historical context of the development of atomic physics, its main focus is on the development of the atomic bomb during World War II, 1939 to 1945.

The term 'atomic', rather than nuclear, is used throughout because it was the term used at the time. The

chapter aims to illuminate Smuts's role at the onset of the atomic age; in the development of nuclear science in South Africa; and his declared position on nuclear non-proliferation. This second historical phase of Smuts and the bomb presented here covers the period from 1945 to Smuts's election defeat by the National Party (NP) under the leadership of D.F. Malan in the general election of 1948. Therefore, the chapter is not concerned with the techno-nationalism under the National Party government that led, inter alia, to South Africa's development of six and a half nuclear bombs. This period is documented elsewhere (Newby-Fraser, 1979; Von Wielligh & von Wielligh-Steyn, 2015; Albright & Stricker 2016).

The chapter proceeds with a brief discussion on the development of nuclear physics and the discovery of the nuclear chain reaction, and especially developments in Germany in this field and the outbreak of World War II. It also refers to physicists' realisation of the destructive power of the nuclear chain and its use as the ultimate weapon. The section also refers to some scientists' efforts to build the bomb, and others' calls for control of the bomb and its non-use. Hereafter, the chapter turns to Smuts and South Africa's uranium, and the Anglo-American quest to build the atomic bomb. The third part of the chapter focuses on Smuts and the global atomic order after World War II. The penultimate section of the chapter assesses Smuts's contribution to nuclear science and nuclear proliferation before presenting the chapter's findings.

The Dawn of the Atomic Age

In 1789, German chemist Martin Klaproth discovered uranium, naming it after the planet Uranus. More than a century lapsed before Wilhelm Röntgen discovered ionising radiation in 1895. Before the end of the nineteenth century, Henri Becquerel, and Marie and Pierre Curie's work, for example, resulted in the discovery of radioactivity. The beginning of the twentieth century saw Albert Einstein, Ernst Rutherford, Niels Bohr, and Frederick Soddy, amongst others, advancing nuclear science

with their theories and discoveries. Bohr received the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1922. By the 1930s, he took a keen interest in atomic physics and involved himself in the discovery of fission. In 1932, James Chadwick discovered the neutron, followed, in 1938, by German psychists Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassmann discovering nuclear fission. Their German compatriots Lise Meitner and her nephew Otto Frisch, working under Bohr, discovered the splitting of the nucleus. Building upon their predecessors, Meitner and Frisch discovered the massive energy released by this splitting; effectively proving Einstein's theoretical work published in 1905 (WNA, 2020).

In Germany, these scientific developments had particularly accelerated since Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933. The development of atomic science was one of the dedicated Nazi science projects and politically supported; albeit it in earnest from 1941 onwards (Cornwell, 2013). By this time, Germany had lost many 'non-Aryan' scientists to, for example, the United States (US) and Britain. Subsequent to Hitler's invasion of Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938, large numbers of physicists, predominantly Jewish, had left Europe for academic positions in the US. Amongst these refugees were Leo Szilard, Edward Teller, Hans Bethe, James Franck and Eugene Wigner. These scientists knew the work of German atomic physicists who were concerned with Hitler's atomic bomb ambitions. German scientists Hahn and Strassmann, for example, discovered the self-sustaining nature of nuclear chain reactions in 1939.

In April 1939 (barely five months before World War II erupted), Werner Heisenberg was appointed to lead Germany's nuclear energy development project. In hindsight, this was a sign that was misread by, for example, US President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. However, scientists did not misread Heisenberg's appointment, heightening their concerns about Germany's nuclear ambitions. By the time World War II broke out in September 1939, nuclear physics was well advanced in Germany and elsewhere by additional research by, amongst others, Francis Perrin, Rudolf Peierls and Werner Heisenberg

(WNA, 2020). By 1939, Bohr, for example, had been working on Uranium[235] and the mineral's ability to accelerate a chain reaction.

Mindful of German advances in atomic physics, Szilard, Teller and Wigner contacted Albert Einstein to approach US President Franklin Roosevelt to warn him of these advances and the risk they posed. On 2 August 1939 (a month before the start of World War II), Einstein wrote to President Roosevelt informing him of new research on uranium that identified the potential for a large mass of uranium to trigger a nuclear chain reaction. Einstein also mentioned the possibility of the production of unprecedented destructive bombs based on this technology. Moreover, Einstein also mentioned that the US lacked sufficient uranium, but pointed to its abundance in Canada and the Belgian Congo. More disturbingly, Einstein indicated that Germany had stopped the sale of uranium from occupied Czechoslovakia and had taken over the country's uranium mines. Einstein also informed Roosevelt that the German Under Secretary of State, physicist Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker's son was attached to the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Physics in Berlin where some of the US scholarship on uranium was disseminated. The senior von Weizsäcker studied with Werner Heisenberg, Friedrich Hund and Niels Bohr. Von Weizsäcker worked at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute where he developed the theory behind a plutonium bomb. Einstein also recommended that the US should secure its supply of uranium and accelerate experimental work (Einstein, 1939). Einstein received no response from the White House and never participated in the Manhattan Project. Von Weizsäcker was present at a meeting in September 1939 where it was decided that Nazi Germany would develop a nuclear bomb under the leadership of Heisenberg. By 1941, it was reported that more than 1,000 scientists were, for example, working at one German research institute in Munich alone (Sondern, 1941).

Hitler's *Blitzkrieg* (Lighting War) in 1940, although initially successful, met resistance as the Russian winter set in. Whereas Germany was winning the conventional war at the time, it was already struggling in some of its campaigns, and

the US's joining of the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 meant that Germany was set to face even fiercer competition. The scientific-military industrial complex in Germany was pressured to deliver fast results to counter this. In June 1942, Heisenberg and his colleagues were already under pressure to deliver an atomic bomb. Heisenberg told an audience that included Albert Speer, the new Nazi Minister of Armaments, that: 'according to the positive results received so far, after the construction of the nuclear reactor one can follow the path proposed by von Weizsacker in order to create nuclear explosives a million times more effective than those currently known' (Grunden, Walker & Yamazaki, 2005:114).

Coincidently, when Heisenberg made the statement (June 1942), the US president was informed of the status of the US atomic weapons programme, namely that it was possible to build an atomic bomb that could be decisive in combat. The president was given the undertaking that such a bomb could be ready to determine the outcome of World War II. Roosevelt approved the report containing the information. Following this, Lesley Groves was appointed as the Director of what became known as the Manhattan Project to develop the atomic bomb (Groves, 1962). Technical challenges and the financial cost were only two of the factors that delayed the development of the atomic bomb, but, in mid-1944, Groves was adamant that the bomb would be ready by 1 August 1945. On 16 July 1945, the US tested its first atomic bomb (Gosling, 1999:40, 48).

Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, and Denmark in 1940, where Bohr was working in parallel with his involvement in British academia. Once the American presence was felt in the theatre of war, the search for a German 'wonder weapon' became politically more urgent but, as Hitler started to lose the war, funding increasingly became scarce. By 1943, the British government, fully aware of Bohr's scientific advances, was keen to evacuate Bohr from Denmark; especially after Moscow became aware of Bohr's work, as well as Anglo-American ambitions to build an atomic bomb. Not only

did academic freedom suffer under German occupation, but Britain and its Allies were concerned about reports of Germany's nuclear weapons programme. The Soviet Union was also keen to have Bohr on their side and invited the scientist and his family to Moscow 'where everything would be done to give you shelter' (Pais, 1991:499). However, in September 1943, Bohr and his son Aage, also a physicist, fled to Sweden and, with the assistance of British intelligence, was flown to Britain on 6 October 1943. Upon his arrival, Bohr's British colleagues informed him of Anglo-American atomic energy developments. By this time the Quebec Agreement had been signed and British scientists had already been posted to Los Alamos, Berkeley and New York to collaborate on atomic research. General Leslie Groves approved a British request for Bohr and his son to visit the American facilities. In the US, Bohr spent time at Los Alamos and in Washington. During this period, he made further technical contributions to the development of the atomic bomb (Cockcroft, 1963:37-46).

By February 1944, Bohr's concerns over the implications of atomic bombs for the future of humanity increasingly surfaced. Bohr was also concerned about the future control of these weapons. He was also of the opinion that, after the surrender of Germany, the mere possession, rather than the use of, the atomic bomb by the US and Britain would force Germany to submit to the demands of the Allies and secure humanity's future. Bohr argued that humanity's common purpose to prevent the use of atomic bombs could, in fact, be the basis for peaceful cooperation with the Soviet Union. Through an intermediary, Bohr was also able to correspond to Roosevelt on the future political implications of the bomb which was referred to as 'x' in their correspondence. Roosevelt undertook to discuss future safeguards with his British counterpart, Churchill (Cockcroft, 1963:38-46).

In April and May 1944, Bohr engaged with influential Britons, such as Sir John Anderson (Churchill's minister for the bomb), and Lord Cherwell (wartime adviser to Churchill), to discuss the future safeguarding and international control of the bomb with the British Prime Minister. Cherwell eventually

arranged for him and Bohr to meet with Churchill, but Bohr regarded the meeting as a failure.

Hereafter, Anderson and Cherwell contacted Smuts, a member of Churchill's inner circle. A meeting between Smuts and Bohr followed during which the scientist briefed the statesman on the imminent production of the atomic bomb. Like Bohr, Smuts had strong views on the dangers of releasing the atomic genie out of the bottle and was also in favour of international control of nuclear weapons and energy. In a subsequent meeting with Churchill, Smuts was able to impress on the Prime Minister the need to discuss the matters raised by Bohr (i.e., international control and safeguards etc.) with Roosevelt.

A few months later, on 26 August 1944, Bohr was able to meet privately with President Roosevelt. Bohr's position was that the Soviet Union should be informed of the atomic bomb built by the US before it was used, but that no technical details should be shared with them. For Bohr this was essential to build trust between the US, Britain and the Soviet Union, and foster collaboration on scientific and industrial nuclear issues to prevent a nuclear arms race. However, when Roosevelt and Churchill met a month later, it was decided to keep the atomic bomb top secret and not share details with Stalin (Cockcroft, 1963:38-46).

By July 1945, Hitler had committed suicide and Germany surrendered while her ally, Japan, was extending the war in the Pacific. Allied powers convened a meeting in Potsdam in Germany to, inter alia, discuss the fate of Japan. President Harry Truman succeeded Roosevelt after his passing on 12 April 1945. Truman therefore attended the Allies' Potsdam Conference on 26 July 1945 and, despite Britain's opposition to informing Stalin, he was told of the US superbomb. Stalin's casual response to Truman was not unexpected as he had been informed of the atomic weapons programme as early as 1942 as a result of the espionage of Klaus Fuchs (Gosling, 1999:50). Fuchs, a German-born scientist, who became a British citizen in 1942, worked on Britain's equivalent of the

Manhattan Project, the Tube Alloys programme, was sent to represent Britain at the Manhattan Project (MI5, 2024). After the war, Fuchs (1950) admitted his role in passing information of Anglo-American scientific development to Moscow. In conclusion, Smuts's atomic diplomacy included his role in the British war effort by supporting Churchill and Britain publicly, while at the same time advancing his personal interests and those of South Africa (Baker, 2011).

South African Uranium, and the Anglo-American Quest for the Atomic Bomb

During World War II, the US, Canada and Britain signed the Quebec Agreement in August 1943 to collaborate on nuclear research. Under the leadership of US president Franklin Roosevelt, and the Prime Ministers of Canada (MacKenzie King) and Britain (Winston Churchill), the US, Canada and Britain established the Combined Policy Development Committee in terms of the Quebec Agreement. The purpose of the Committee was to exchange information and resources on the development of the atomic bomb. Another outcome of the Quebec Agreement and the Committee was the establishment of the Combined Development Trust, charged with the procurement of uranium and to finance uranium extraction. Canada was excluded from the trust as it had shown no interest in developing the atomic bomb. Following the establishment of the Combined Development Trust, officials of these countries studied North America, India, Portugal and the Belgian Congo for uranium. However, by this time, Groves had already commenced on a clandestine programme, code-named Murray Hill, to identify and procure uranium from international sources for the American atomic programme (Herken, 1980:54). Ultimately, the Manhattan Project's bombs were fuelled with uranium from the Belgian Congo. However, the latter's uranium resources proved to be insufficient, and the search was extended to South Africa (Fig, 1999a:76-78).

The existence of the Combined Development Trust was kept secret for five years and not even Smuts was

informed of its existence. Meanwhile, Britain was under pressure to contribute uranium in terms of the Combined Development Trust. By now, the US and Britain were wary of Stalin's intention of embarking on the development of an atomic capability adding to these countries' intense efforts to develop the atomic bombs before the Soviet Union. Britain had to rely on members of the Commonwealth to assist in the procurement of uranium. As Fuchs (1950) has admitted, by then he had already started to spy for Moscow.

As the Anglo-American search for uranium intensified, Churchill approached Smuts in 1944 to investigate earlier reports of uranium deposits in South Africa and its League of Nations Class C Mandate, South West Africa (now Namibia). It was known that, in 1888, Sir William Crooks attributed to uranium the green fluorescence of small diamonds recovered amongst Witwatersrand (the wider Johannesburg region) gold ore. More exploration occurred and by 1923 metallurgist R.A. Cooper identified uranite in a heavy mineral concentrate at City Deep Gold Mine on the Witwatersrand (AEC, 1988:i). However, to convince Smuts, Churchill needed to provide Smuts with the rationale for his request. It was only then, despite their close relationship, that Churchill informed Smuts of Anglo-American collaboration on the development of an atomic bomb. Following Churchill's request to Smuts and further exploration, large uranium deposits were discovered on the Witwatersrand gold-bearing reef around Johannesburg. The discovery of these large South African uranium deposits added to the US and Britain's security of supply. However, it was not only Britain that sought uranium in South Africa. Possibly due to Groves' Murray Hill project, two individuals attached to the Manhattan Project, W. Bourret and F. West, visited South Africa in 1944 to determine the uranium potential of the Witwatersrand gold reefs (AEC, 1988:i). It remains unclear why Smuts was not informed of the programme *ab initio*; a matter that requires further research. One possible explanation was the secret nature of these decisions and the institutions that were established in terms thereof.

Smuts took a personal interest in uranium exploration in South Africa. One reason was that South African uranium is found in gold-bearing rock; thus, mining for the one also produced the other. Smuts also realised the economic potential and political leverage value of South Africa's uranium (Fig, 1999b:59).

At Home and Abroad: Smuts and the Atomic Order after World War II

After World War II and the establishment of the United Nations, South Africa was increasingly attacked for its racial policies by the Soviet and Afro-Asian blocs that formed at the UN. Smuts was aware of the significance of South Africa's ties with the US and Britain as a counterbalance to these blocs. Smuts was also mindful of the economic advantage to South Africa should the US and Britain remain dependent on uranium from South Africa. As these developments transpired, Smuts, inspired by the US Atomic Energy Commission and the British Atomic Energy Authority, established the South African Uranium Research Committee in 1945 to control atomic research and development in South Africa, and to control the production and trade of radioactive substances on behalf of the state as their owner (Fig, 1999a:76-78). The Uranium Research Commission was independent of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) but effectively was answerable to Smuts himself.

As Smuts was often in Britain during World War II, he at times met up with South African scientist Basil Schonland, Director of Britain's Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Hartwell and, during the war, head of Britain's Army Operational Research Group (i.e., effectively in charge of all scientific work in the War Office) and Field Marshall Bernard Law Montgomery's scientific adviser at the 21st Army Group Main Headquarters during the invasion of Europe. Smuts had known Schonland's family and was impressed with the young scientist and, as Smuts was already thinking beyond the end of the war, he extended a personal invitation to Schonland

to return to South Africa to establish and lead the country's scientific and industrial research organisation. Schonland accepted Smuts's offer and left the 21st Army Group in August 1944 and returned to South Africa to establish the country's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in 1945 (Austin, 2016:262). Schonland's vision of the development of nuclear physics in South Africa was an extension of his earlier associations with the Cavendish Laboratory at Cambridge and his subsequent wartime networks. Schonland was also a friend of Edward Appleton, the recipient of the Nobel Prize in Physics, and John Cockcroft of the British nuclear establishment. Cockcroft was, through his association with the Chalk River Laboratories in Canada, involved in the Manhattan Project and aware of South Africa's uranium deposits (Beinart & Dubow, 2021:264).

By February 1946, Smuts had appointed scientists and officials to the Committee. Links were established with institutions in the US and Britain. In fact, Smuts went on a personal mission to meet General Groves, who led the Manhattan Project. Besides this, Smuts eventually negotiated a secret agreement with the US and Britain to be the recipients of almost all South Africa's uranium exports; a major boost for South Africa's post-war economic reconstruction and development (Fig, 1999b:59).

Churchill, who lost the British general election on 5 July 1945 just months after Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) on 8 May 1945, was succeeded by the Labour Party's Clement Attlee. After the war, Attlee continued with efforts to secure Britain's uranium supplies. Given its abundant uranium resources, South Africa was a natural choice to secure supply. However, Smuts was initially opposed to Britain's suggestions in this regard. Britain appealed to Smuts's strong Commonwealth sentiments. Smuts was persuaded to prevent Britain, and by extension the Commonwealth, from being left behind in the atomic race. Attlee was also confident that South Africa would easily provide uranium to Britain. However, after a meeting between the US president and the Prime Ministers of Britain and Canada that decided that Britain would supply

these countries with uranium from South Africa, Britain was surprised by Smuts's reluctance in December 1945 to sell South African uranium to Britain exclusively (Asuelime, 2013:34-35). Britain now faced insecure uranium supplies which it had hoped it could use as a bargaining chip to continue nuclear collaboration with the US. Smuts was aware of the economic and industrial benefits of uranium. Smuts, therefore, refused to agree to the British offer, but Britain dispatched its High Commission in the Union of South Africa, Sir Evelyn Baring, to consult with Smuts and reiterate Britain's commitment to the Union and the strategic benefits for the Commonwealth should South Africa agree to the British offer. Baring relayed a message from his Prime Minister to Smuts, namely that Britain had established solid relations with the US to advance its own nuclear programme that would also be beneficial to the Commonwealth. It was only when Smuts attended a Commonwealth meeting in Britain in May 1946 that he informed Lord Portal, the senior official responsible for atomic energy in the British Ministry of Supply, that South Africa would sell its uranium to Britain. Smuts did not agree to a specific volume to provide to Britain. More importantly, Smuts was not fully informed of the Commonwealth's position in the Combined Development Trust and its obligations to the US. However, Smuts was not opposed to providing uranium to the US as he saw it as an opportunity to garner for American investment in South Africa, but at the 1946 Commonwealth meeting, members were informed that their direct links to the US should not prejudice Anglo-US relations and collaboration in the nuclear field.

When Britain decided to proceed with the construction of atomic weapons, it expected generous American scientific sharing and collaboration. However, for Britain this did not materialise, which led Britain to turn to the Commonwealth. British officials proposed plans to develop African atomic capabilities as a Commonwealth joint venture and that South Africa should foot the bill. Eventually, the technical difficulties and the danger of spreading nuclear technology elsewhere

were also considered and made some contribution to stopping the African nuclear project.

In the meantime, American patience with Britain on the delay of South African uranium supplies wore thin. Smuts was part of the delay as he first wanted to consult with the gold industry in South Africa and only accepted a British offer to sell uranium in May 1947. At this time, Britain's war time financial woes continued and the country was unable to meet its financial obligations promised to Smuts. Britain attempted to rescue itself by considering offering a lower price, but Smuts was also aware that British investment in the South African mining industry had slumped. He agreed to discuss the matter during his attendance of the wedding of Princess Elizabeth.

In his meeting with Attlee, Smuts was more agreeable to the British offer and to supplying uranium to the US. Smuts also offered to provide the financial capital for the extraction and supply of uranium. Despite the efforts to please the US, as indicated earlier, Britain's expectations of comprehensive nuclear collaboration with the US did not fully materialise. For the US, a secure supply of uranium became more pressing as its nuclear, military and industrial complex grew. Following Bourret's and West's visit to South Africa in 1944, Dr G. Bain, a consultant to the Manhattan Project, and C.F. Davidson, a geologist attached to the British Atomic Energy Board, visited South Africa. Bain and Davidson continued investigations of the Reef that proved to be more uriniferous than previous sampling. The US and Britain intended to use the Combined Development Trust to finance four uranium extraction plants on four Witwatersrand gold mines; an initiative that eventually expanded to 17 plants serving 27 gold mines on the Witwatersrand (AEC, 1988:i).

At this time, Smuts dispatched Schonland, director of the CSIR, and Leonard Taverner, director of the Government Metallurgical Laboratory, to the US and Britain to discuss uranium contracts with potential investors. Smuts was also preparing for an election against the National Party and was clear that he would only develop a uranium policy for South

Africa later in 1948. This never materialised because Smuts lost the election; further complicating the uranium issue (Asuelime, 2013:6-41).

By the time Smuts left office in 1948, South Africa was the only Commonwealth country that could sustainably supply uranium. Britain remained concerned that it could not supply uranium to the US. It was also clear that Smuts was taking South African uranium development into a direction more favourable to itself rather than to Britain (Asuelime, 2013:36-41). The National Party under D.F. Malan, ironically, took the development of uranium and nuclear energy further than Smuts intended. With the promulgation of the Atomic Energy Act (Act 35 of 1948) Smuts's Uranium Research Committee was transformed into the Atomic Energy Board on 1 January 1949 (Fig, 1999a:76-78).

'Smuts's contribution to nuclear science and nuclear non-proliferation

Smuts is widely acknowledged for his contribution in the establishment of a stable international order after the two world wars. Besides his involvement instituting the League of Nations in 1919 (Smuts, 1918), he was also actively involved in the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. His preference for, and advocacy of multilateralism, made him an outstanding international statesman. His understanding of science, particularly physics, made him all too aware of the dangers of nuclear weapons and a proponent of nuclear non-proliferation. In fact, he confided to Churchill: '...it [the nuclear bomb] will no longer remain a secret, and its disclosure after the war may start the most destructive competition in the world.... If ever there was a matter for international control, this is one' (Masiza, 1993:35). Smuts also laid a strong scientific and industrial foundation for South Africa. His achievements include, for example, the establishment of the Electricity Supply Commission (Escom) in 1923 and the CSIR in February 1945. Besides the establishment of national institutions, Smuts's own identity as a scientist played an

enormous role. His wide scientific interests were further stimulated as he moved on the global stage and developed, for example, his ideas on holism. Smuts also engaged with scientists to promote South African interests and patriotism. His interest in South African scientific research raised awareness of South African scholarship abroad. Moreover, his interest in South Africa's natural world and the stimulation of South African science could be regarded as the establishment of South African science and scientific South Africanism (Beinart & Dubow, 2021:203, 206). Besides his scientific publications, Smuts often spoke on science and addressed scientific audiences and conferences (Smuts, 1925; 1926; 1932). He also led several South African and international scientific organisations such as the South African Association for the Advancement of Science (S2A3) (as president in 1925) and invited numerous scientists to South Africa (Beinart & Dubow, 2021:237). Smuts was thus actively involved in and supportive of scientific knowledge production in South Africa.

Besides the establishment of Escom and the CSIR, Smuts was also a keen promoter of scientists to lead national institutions. Besides the appointment of Schonland, the case of Hendrik van der Bijl is illustrative. Van der Bijl completed a doctorate in physics in Leipzig in 1912 and moved to New York in 1913 to take up employment at the American Telephone Company (later Bell Telephone Laboratories). Van der Bijl kept a keen eye on American industrial development and, cognisant of its lessons for South Africa, produced a paper, *Scientific research and industrial research* in 1919. This and van der Bijl's (1920) groundbreaking work on thermionic valves to amplify radio and telephone signals and his book, *The Thermionic Tube and Its Applications*, did not pass Smuts unnoticed. In 1920, after World War I, Smuts appointed van der Bijl as his Scientific and Industrial Advisor on Industrial Development in the Department of Mines. Van der Bijl's first major success back in South Africa was the establishment of the state-owned power utility, Escom (later Eskom) in 1923. Hereafter two other public entities followed, the South African Iron and Steel Corporation (Iscor) (1925) and the Industrial Development

Corporation (IDC) (1940). At the outbreak of World War II, Smuts appointed van der Bijl as his Director-General of War Supplies (effectively Minister of Supply) to purchase or develop armaments for South Africa's war effort (Schonland, 1950:27-34).

Conclusion

Jan Smuts had left an indelible mark on South Africa and the international arena. For this he received many accolades. He remains a historical figure with immense contemporary relevance. The chapter addressed a neglected aspect in Smutsian studies, i.e., Smuts's involvement, role and views on the development, use and control of the atomic bomb. Smuts, the scientist, fully understood physics and the potential of nuclear energy development. During his two terms as Prime Minister, Smuts invested in the development of science and industrial research through the establishment of institutions such as the CSIR and Escom. As a confidant, colleague and friend of Churchill, Smuts was instrumental in Britain's war campaigns. Although Smuts was deeply committed to the Commonwealth and the Union's status and role in it, he was cautious to seal a uranium export agreement with Britain. Smuts maintained that Britain's offer was not serving South Africa's national interests, and that South Africa should gain more economic, scientific and industrial advantage from the country's uranium resources. Britain's uranium offer to South Africa was a cause of concern for Britain's commitment to the US and the Quebec Agreement. However, and despite his close relations with Churchill and his inner circle, the development of the atomic bomb was top secret, and Smuts was only informed of its development in 1944. This could be regarded as a snub to Smuts who would have supported the development of nuclear science on a global scale, as he did in South Africa. Smuts's role in the Allies' war against Nazi Germany was significant.

On a personal level, Smuts maintained private correspondence with nuclear physicists such as Einstein and

Bohr. Smuts's close relations with Bohr was also instrumental in the statesman's views on the bomb. Whereas Bohr was concerned about the devastation the use of a nuclear bomb could cause, he was in favour of telling the Soviet Union, as a member of the Allied alliance, of the development and existence of the bomb. Bohr was nevertheless adamant that Stalin should not be provided with the technical details of the programme. Smuts diverged from his friend and, like Churchill, maintained that, under no circumstances, should the Soviet Union be informed of the bomb. However, as indicated, Stalin became aware of the programme in 1943, and Germany was, at the time, also making significant progress in their atomic bomb programme. Smuts was, like Einstein and Bohr, for example, a proponent of the international control of the atomic bomb to prevent nuclear proliferation. There is no record of Smuts's opposition to the development of the atomic bomb but, in his writings, for example, he made it clear that scientific development should be to the advantage of humanity; a position - the peaceful use of nuclear energy - that later emerged as one of the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) which entered into force in March 1970.

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