

SOUTH AFRICA AND WORLD WAR II: THE DECISIVE FIRST TWO YEARS ON THE HOME FRONT (SEPTEMBER 1939-SEPTEMBER 1941)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sixty years ago the Second World War, the most devastating war the world has ever experienced, broke out. When Britain went to war against Nazi Germany on 3 September 1939, it placed the South African government of Gen. JBM Hertzog in a predicament. Since fusion and the formation of the United Party (UP) in 1934 the question of South Africa staying neutral or not in case of a war in Europe in which Britain would be involved, was debated on several occasions, but Hertzog - who was in favour of neutrality - and his Deputy Prime Minister, Gen. JC Smuts - who was in favour of some form of participation - decided to agree to differ on this crucial and emotional matter.² At the beginning of September 1939 the cabinet was divided on the issue of neutrality and the matter was referred to the House of Assembly for a final decision. After a lengthy debate on Monday 4 September 1939, parliament rejected Hertzog's neutrality motion by 80 votes to 67 and accepted Smuts' motion in favour of qualified participation by the same majority.³

Hertzog was convinced that the outcome of the voting was not a correct representation of the feelings of the voters and advised the Governor-General, Sir Patrick Duncan, to dissolve parliament and call a general election. However, Duncan was convinced that an election under the prevailing excited circumstances would lead to violence, that the question of South Africa's neutrality or participation had been keenly debated during the 1938 election campaign and that the elected representatives of the people had now made a decision by a

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2 A Reeves, *The war issue and the demise of the Fusion Government in 1939* (M.A. thesis, University of Natal, 1984), pp. 49-158; LJ van der Westhuizen, *Die neutraliteitsvraagstuk as verdelingsfaktor in die Suid-Afrikaanse politiek (1933-1940), met spesiale verwysing na genl. JBM Hertzog* (M.A. thesis, University of the Orange Free State, 1984), p. 22 et seq.

3 FD Tothill, "Why General Smuts won on 4 September 1939" in *Kleio* 19, 1987, pp. 5-28; PW Coetzer and JH le Roux, *Die Nasionale Party 4* (Bloemfontein, 1986), pp. 259-72.

substantial majority. Having ascertained that Smuts was in a position, and willing, to form a new government, Duncan accepted Hertzog's resignation.⁴ Smuts' cabinet was sworn in on 6 September. On the same day South Africa declared war against Germany.⁵

Like the other Allies, the Union of South Africa was ill-prepared for war in September 1939. The Union Defence Forces (UDF) were in a sorry state. The country's population - which in 1939 numbered about ten million: about seven million blacks, just more than two million whites, 750 000 so-called coloureds⁶ and 250 000 Indians - was not only divided along racial, ethnic and language lines,⁷ but was also in a state of transition, with an ever greater proportion of the population moving from rural to urban areas. Urbanization was but one of the factors influencing social life in South Africa towards the end of the 1930s. By that time the country had not yet completely recovered from the devastating depression of 1929 to 1933, and it was an open question whether the country's economy could sustain a war effort. Politically the country was probably also more divided than ever before in its troubled history. Afrikaner nationalism reigned supreme in these years, gave rise to the founding of several organizations, and complicated the political scene. In the meantime, black consciousness also grew, placing the Union government's race policy under even more pressure. There was a very real possibility that white and black extremists could use the war conditions to further their own aims, even using violent means to do so.

In this article the problems, potential dangers and other challenges facing Smuts and the new government will be discussed, analysed and evaluated. In an effort to ascertain to what extent the period September 1939 to September 1941 was of decisive importance for South Africa's war effort, the way in which these challenges, etc. were addressed during the first two years of war will be briefly set out - always keeping in mind the implications and consequences that the decisions taken and work done during the first two years had on the Union's war effort up to the cessation of hostilities. As far as the home front is concerned, the emphasis will fall on the political, economic and social conditions, and the

4 Manuscripts and Archives Department (University of Cape Town), Duncan Papers, Doc A 27.1 - Doc A 27.7: Several memoranda and letters.

5 **Government Gazette** 2626, 6 September 1939, p.i. Ironically one of Duncan's three sons, Maj. Andrew Duncan, was killed in the Libyan desert in 1942. **Dictionary of South African Biography** [henceforth abbreviated as DSAB] 1 (Cape Town, 1968), p. 260.

6 When the term "coloured(s)" is used in this article no negative connotation is implied. This is also the case when the term "non-white(s)" is sometimes used out of necessity.

7 Republic of South Africa, Central Statistical Service, **South African statistics 1982** Pretoria, 1982), table 1.7 et seq.

activities in those fields. Attention will also be given to the role played by Smuts and other prominent figures.

2. STRIFE IN AFRIKANER RANKS

The outcome of the war debate of 4 September 1939 brought about a complete change in South African politics and led to a new political orientation. The UP was torn in two - the great political experiment of the 1930s had failed. Monday 4 September also marked the beginning of an extremely trying period in the Union's history, with divided loyalties, enmity and fraternal strife being the order of the day. With the end of the fusion era, the old political battle-lines between Afrikaans and English-speaking white South Africans were to a large extent once again drawn. Although this meant that Afrikaners would perhaps re-unite, it soon became clear that for the foreseeable future there would be bigger dissension in Afrikaner ranks than between the two largest white language groups. Eventually the political warfare at home lasted even longer than the military conflict, culminating in Smuts' defeat in the 1948 general election.

Since the symbolic ox-wagon trek of 1938 there had been a profound revival of Afrikaner nationalism. This led to the formation of the Ossewa Brandwag (OB) on 4 February 1939.⁸ The outbreak of war and Smuts' decision to take the Union into the conflict on the side of Britain, stimulated Afrikaner nationalism and republicanism. Many Afrikaners favoured a republic, inter alia because they believed that only then the country would never again be involved with "Britain's wars". But Afrikaners differed over the type of republic envisaged, whether it should be a national socialist republic (as Oswald Pirow and his New Order believed), a no-party state (as the OB believed) or a parliamentary democracy (as Nationalists believed).⁹

8 P de Klerk, "Afrikanerdenkers en die beginsels van die Ossewabrandwag" in *Journal for Contemporary History* 14(1), June 1989, pp. 43-81; P de Klerk, "Die Ossewabrandwag se ideaal van 'n nuwe samelewingsorde in Suid-Afrika" in *ibid.* 14(2), December 1989, pp. 90-131; PJ Furlong, *Between crown and swastika: the impact of the radical right on the Afrikaner nationalist movement in the fascist era* (Johannesburg, 1991), p. 138 et seq.

9 DW Krüger, *The making of a nation: a history of the Union of South Africa, 1910-1961* (Johannesburg, 1975), p. 211; JPC Mostert, "Die RSA: staatkundig/konstitusionele grondslae - 'n historiese perspektief" in JPC Mostert (ed.), *Die Suid-Afrikaanse krisis: perspektiewe op die grondwetlike bestel* (Bloemfontein, 1986), p. 36; *Opmars na die republiek: dr. Malan oor Herenigde Nasionale Party se toekomsbeleid vir 'n nuwe Suid-Afrika* (pamphlet).

For a short time after 4 September 1939 it seemed as if Afrikaner political leaders would be able to sort out their differences and unite Afrikanerdom against Smuts and his allies. An emotional gathering attended by Hertzog, Malan and at least 40 000 supporters was held on Saturday 9 September at the site just south of Pretoria where the corner-stone of the Voortrekker Monument had been laid in 1938.¹⁰ There was much talk of a political re-uniting of Afrikaners who held similar views, but it soon became clear that the rift between Hertzog and Malan would not easily be healed. During the five years preceding the outbreak of war, Hertzogites and Malanites had attacked one another with all the fury reserved for family quarrels. Now, in 1940, a new party called the Hereenigde Nasionale Party or Volksparty (HNP) was formed, but the two groups were combined rather than united.¹¹

It was an uneasy alliance, and after months of discussion, complicated by intrigues against Hertzog's leadership on the part of younger Nationalists like HF Verwoerd and CR Swart, the two groups failed to agree. The final break came at the Free State congress of the HNP which was held in Bloemfontein in November 1940. Hertzog's proposals for a new programme of principles were rejected and he and a few followers left to form the Afrikaner Party on 24 January 1941. Soon afterwards Hertzog left politics and died a lonely figure on 21 November 1942.¹²

In the meantime, the fall of Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and France in 1940 convinced many Afrikaners that they would win their political salvation through Nazi victories. On 29 August 1940 Hertzog demanded that Smuts sue for peace,¹³ and Malan urged the establishment of a republic and withdrawal from the Commonwealth. It was not uncommon for gentler Hertzogites to say that they did not want Britain to lose, but wanted her to suffer as Afrikanerdom had suffered during the Anglo-Boer War. Many Malanites, however, wanted nothing less than Britain's total and humiliating defeat, even though it meant defeat of their own country!¹⁴ As Leo Marquard

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- 10 Die Transvaler, 11 September 1939, pp. 1, 5-6; Die Vaderland, 11 September 1939, pp. 3, 4.
 11 JA du Pisani, John Vorster en die verlig/verkrampstryd: 'n studie van die politieke verdeeldheid in Afrikanergeleedere, 1966-1970 (Bloemfontein, 1988), pp. 107-52.
 12 L. Marquard, *The peoples and policies of South Africa* (London, 1952), pp. 142-3; JH le Roux et al. (eds.), *General JBM Hertzog: sy strewe en stryd 2* (Johannesburg, 1987), pp. 692-725; P Meiring, *Generaal Hertzog: 50 jaar daarna* (Johannesburg, 1943), pp. 719-31.
 13 Hansard 40 (Cape Town, s.a.), columns 79-196, 235-419. Hertzog's motion was rejected by 83 votes to 65.
 14 A Paton, *Hofmeyr* (Cape Town, 1971), pp. 265-6. As far as political opposition to the war is concerned, see also M Roberts and AEG Trollip, *The South African opposition 1939-45: an*

correctly points out, all the moral and political authority of a considerable opposition was used to hamper the war effort, one of several serious results being that throughout the war there was never an effective alternative war government. Consequently the criticism of Smuts' war policy was never really responsible and the government was never able to take the opposition into its confidence, and was thus deprived of all effective criticism.¹⁵

Especially during the first two war years the republican ideal - which was supposed to unite Afrikaners - became one of the causes for serious divisions. This suited Smuts, and by September 1941 his mastery was complete. Some of his followers urged him to take action against those whose speeches were calculated to goad and wound. But Smuts took no such steps: his enemies were taking steps for him.¹⁶ The Union was at war with Germany and later also with Italy, but the Afrikaners were even more at war with themselves. If ever the government had been in danger from the opposition, that danger had abated by about September 1941. By its actions the opposition proved its impotence.¹⁷ Small wonder that the 1943 general election saw Smuts returned to power by a sweeping majority.¹⁸

3. MILITANT OPPOSITION AGAINST THE UNION'S WAR EFFORT

While the politicians repositioned themselves, there were many Afrikaners who lost faith in democratic institutions and sought political salvation through other means. As opposition against the Union's participation in the war grew, blame was heaped upon Smuts, British imperialists and Jewish capitalists. Anti-Semitism has never been a pattern in Afrikaner thinking, but during the war years anti-Jewish feeling spread and the German propagandist machine through Zeesen radio nightly fanned the flames. People who had scarcely heard of national socialism before were swept off their feet and began to toy with the Nazi ideology.¹⁹ One of the striking anomalies of South Africa during World War II was that while the country was fighting all-out against Hitler in the military sphere, there were local organizations that campaigned for the

essay in contemporary history (London, s.a.), pp. 73-177.

15 Marquard, p. 29.

16 Paton, p. 267.

17 Krüger, p. 211-2.

18 FD Tothill, *The 1943 general election* (M.A. thesis, University of South Africa, 1987), *passim*; JM van den Heever, *Die parlementêre verkiesing van 1943: 'n analise van die faktore wat die verkiesing beïnvloed het* (M.A. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1968), *passim*.

19 Krüger, p. 205.

establishment of a national socialist state. This presented a serious internal embarrassment for a government at war.²⁰

As a factor in South African politics, national socialism dates back to the early 1930s.²¹ During the 1930s and 1940s several organizations emerged which to some degree embraced national socialism, for example the New Order and the Gysheemde, but the most prominent was the OB. The first commandant-general of the OB was Col. JCC Laas, a retired army officer. He was succeeded on 15 January 1941 by Dr JFJ (Hans) van Rensburg, who resigned as administrator of the Orange Free State to take up the new position. Although initially a purely Afrikaner cultural organization, the German military successes during the first phases of the war led to a policy swing in the OB that brought it in line with that of an authoritarian state. Despite suspicion and opposition, the movement grew rapidly, appealing to the imagination of thousands of Afrikaners.²²

The OB gave those who opposed South Africa's participation in the war the opportunity to actively vent their feelings. Under Van Rensburg's leadership the OB became more militant and more actively involved in politics. This brought it into conflict with the HNP. As early as 29 October 1940 the OB and HNP concluded the so-called Cradock Agreement. It was decided that the HNP would further the Afrikaner's interests in the political arena and that the OB would concentrate on matters non-political. However, as time went by the OB did not abide by this decision and in the course of 1941 open confrontation erupted. On 27 August 1941 Malan delivered an ultimatum to the OB: become an action front of the HNP, or else withdraw from the political scene. The OB would not comply with this demand, and the break became an accomplished fact. The HNP - which had used the OB as a weapon with which to frighten Smuts - now pronounced a party ban over the movement and pressure was exerted on HNP members to resign from the OB. By September 1941 the HNP was purging itself of ideological elements foreign to the Afrikaner, and by the end of 1942 the OB as an organization was practically broken.²³

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- 20 HJ Martin and ND Orpen, *South Africa at war: military and industrial organization and operations in connection with the conduct of the war, 1939-1945* (Cape Town, 1979), p. 324.
- 21 FJ van Heerden, *Nasionaal-sosialisme as faktor in die Suid-Afrikaanse politiek* (D.Phil. thesis, University of the Orange Free State, 1972), p. 37 et seq.
- 22 See e.g. Paton, p. 272; BK Murray and AW Stadler, "From the Pact to the advent of apartheid, 1924-1948" in T Cameron (ed.), *An illustrated history of South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1986), p. 262.
- 23 D Prinsloo, "Dr. H.F. Verwoerd en die Ossewa-Brandwag" in *Kleio* 17, 1985, pp. 74-9. The OB gradually faded from the political scene and disbanded in 1952.

Smuts did his best to ignore the OB, but sometimes felt obliged to act against the movement, for example in March 1941 when civil servants were forbidden from thenceforth belonging to it. Some OB leaders were interned under the emergency regulations, although Van Rensburg himself was never interned. The OB was also not banned, probably because Smuts used it as an instrument to canalize anti-war sentiments in a fairly peaceful manner. In the stormy days of 1941 personal action by Van Rensburg was in some instances decisive in preventing violence in the country, and Robey Leibbrandt from getting a hold on the militant wing of the movement.²⁴ By September 1941 it seemed as if Afrikanerdom was, politically speaking, disintegrating. It seemed more divided than ever in its history. Even the Afrikaner Broederbond deliberately entered the political arena in an effort to reconcile the opposing factions, but to no avail.²⁵ Although many of its political and cultural leaders warned against violent actions, there were those Afrikaners who - as was the case in 1914 - wanted to use the world war situation to establish an Afrikaner republic. Emotions ran high and the atmosphere seemed favourable for a repetition of the events of 1914, but this time there was no rebellion, partly because Smuts acted with great wisdom and circumspection and did not provoke trouble, partly because rebellion is not a step lightly undertaken, and partly because in 1939 many Afrikaners hoped Germany would win and nurtured the illusion that a republic might be snatched from such a situation.²⁶

Although no organized insurrection took place, there were several cases of politically inspired unrest as well as acts of sabotage. Tense relations grew between soldiers and that sector of the public that was anti-war. Especially during the first two war years emotions throughout the country were fanned to fever pitch, mainly as a result of anti-war propaganda disseminated by the OB. In 1940 in the Transvaal alone there were 79 reported cases of soldiers attacked by civilians. In August 1940 soldiers stationed at the local military base raided the Potchefstroom University as well as the teachers' training college,²⁷ and on 10 January 1941 Mr Harry Lawrence, Minister of the Interior and of National

24 JC Moll, "Johannes Frederik Janse van Rensburg" in DSAB 4, p. 710.

25 I Wilkens and H Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners* (Johannesburg, 1978), pp. 76-96, 109-11; JHP Serfontein, *Brotherhood of power: an expose of the secret Afrikaner Broedersbond* (London, 1979), pp. 43-4, 48-81.

26 Marquard, p. 29.

27 M de W Dippenaar, *The history of the South African Police 1913-1988* (Silverton, 1988), pp. 149-81; GD Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling van die politieke denke van die Afrikaner 8:1939-1948* (Johannesburg, 1984), p. 254.

Health, was assaulted by OB members while addressing a political meeting at Klerksdorp.²⁸ The evening of 31 January 1941 scuffles broke out outside the Johannesburg city hall and spread to other parts of the city, continuing the next day. Soldiers attacked the buildings of the anti-war newspapers, *Die Transvaler* and *Die Vaderland*, and also the OB's headquarters.²⁹

Most of the violence was perpetrated by the Stormjaers, the military wing of the OB, who also became implicated in the accumulation of illicit arms caches, acts of terrorism and plans for insurrection. They viewed sabotage as heroic acts of resistance against the government's war effort. On the Witwatersrand 25 bomb explosions took place in 1940 and 1941, and a few explosions in other parts of the country. The targets were mostly Jewish businesses, synagogues, newspaper offices, railway lines, bioscope theatres and churches. Considerable damage was done, but the country's war effort was not affected.³⁰

Independent of the Stormjaer activities were the activities of Sidney Robey Leibbrandt, a former South African heavyweight boxing champion, who became a dedicated national socialist and a fanatic who joined the German Army. He qualified as a paratrooper and returned to South Africa in June 1941 to launch Operation Weissdorn, aimed at disrupting the Union's war effort. However, he clashed with the OB leaders, and consequently formed his own national socialist rebel group. A large-scale sabotage campaign was planned, but before the end of 1941 Leibbrandt was apprehended.³¹

Smuts' security measures played a very important role in maintaining relative peace and stability. Ten days after the war debate, the National Emergency Regulations were promulgated by the Governor-General under Proclamation 201 of 14 September 1939. These measures included the declaration of a state of emergency, provision for a National Supplies Control Board, the institution of price control where necessary, the prohibition of profiteering, as well as provision for detention in internment camps.³²

28 *The Star*, 11 February 1941, p. 1 and 3 February 1941, p. 3; *Die Transvaler*, 11 January 1941; p. 1; *Die Vaderland*, 11 January 1941, pp. 1,5.

29 Paton, pp. 271-2; *The Star*, 1 February 1941, pp. 1, 3 and 6 February 1941, pp. 1, 3, 6, 7; *Die Transvaler*, 3 February 1941, pp. 1, 3-5; *Die Vaderland*, 31 January 1941, p. 1 and 3 February 1941, pp. 1-6.

30 Dippenaar, pp. 173, 182-4.

31 JH le Roux, *Robey Leibbrandt die rebel* (Bloemfontein, 1976), *passim*; H Strydom, *For Volk and Führer* (Johannesburg, 1982), *passim*.

32 *Extraordinary Government Gazette* 2679, 14 September 1939, pp. 107.

These and other emergency regulations were validated *ex post facto* by the War Measures Act (Act 13 of 1940).³³ The War Measures Amendment Act (Act 32 of 1940) conferred very wide legislative powers on the Governor-General, who virtually supplanted parliament as legislator.³⁴ The opposition fought tooth and nail against the introduction of measures that would give the executive wide discretionary powers, and to pass the first bill quickly the government applied a guillotine procedure which set a time limit to the debate. This step was unprecedented, but Smuts was in a hurry and wanted to demonstrate his determination.³⁵

Under the far-reaching emergency regulations the government was able to control almost all facets of life in the country. It subjected the disposal of all commodities in the country and the movement and liberty of all inhabitants of the Union to the unfettered discretion of the government. How completely the rule of law was set aside appears from Regulation 15, which authorised the arrest and detention (without charge or trial) of anyone whenever the authorities considered it desirable in the interest of the state or in that person's own interest. In pursuance of this regulation five internment camps for Union citizens were set up. By September 1941 3 936 persons were interned, for example citizens who for a variety of reasons were under suspicion, as well as German and other enemy citizens who were in South Africa when the war broke out.³⁶ To prevent a repetition of the 1914 rebellion, all privately licenced firearms had to be handed in at magistrate courts or police stations. By August 1940 about 88 000 fire-arms had been confiscated, and many more were to follow, despite vehement protests from Afrikaner quarters.³⁷

By acting quickly and decisively, Smuts showed the country that there was a strong government in the saddle, a government which would damp any sparks that might have led to a conflagration, hereby stabilising the internal security situation. By September 1941 there were even indications that the parliamentary and democratic forces in the opposition ranks (as represented by the HNP)

33 *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1939-40* (Cape Town, 1940), pp. 64-70.

34 *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1940-41* (Cape Town, 1941), pp. 2-6.

35 Krüger, p. 202.

36 JF Marais, "Emergency regulations" in *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa* [henceforth abbreviated as *SESA*] 4 (Cape Town, 1971), pp. 300-1 and "South African participation in World War II" in *ibid.* 11 (Cape Town, 1975), pp. 526-7. Eventually a total of 6 636 persons were interned during the war - some for just a few weeks, others for six years.

37 Krüger, p. 204.

were gaining the upper hand over the more militant ideological hotheads. However, Smuts also made many political enemies, and after the war that score was settled.

4. BLACK PEOPLE AND THE WAR

The Second World War brought the race problem in South Africa to a head. The situation in the black reserves deteriorated; black urbanization and black political consciousness increased - but the UP apparently did not have a consistent "non-white" policy. Smuts once even remarked to LS Amery that there was no solution for the race problem,³⁸ and he preferred to shift this problem onto the broad shoulders of the future, as he put it.³⁹ In the light of the fact that the demands for political equality from black quarters became more intense,⁴⁰ and that some whites - like JH Hofmeyr, the liberal spirit in the cabinet - were eager for reforms, Smuts was forced to take up some standpoint, even if it was only to give the impression that there was a solution for the problem. In his views on race matters, Smuts was realistic and pragmatic, although also in many ways a child of his times. He was in favour of white supremacy, race purity and residential separation - but not by unnecessary force. He favoured economic integration, freedom to seek work, and the development of the reserves.⁴¹ Because segregation had fallen on evil ways, Smuts favoured a policy of trusteeship.⁴² However, during the war Smuts did little if anything to solve the "native problem".⁴³

Since 1916 there had been a steady increase in the number of blacks prosecuted under the country's pass laws, laws that prohibited blacks even to move around freely in their country of birth. Because cheap black labour was needed in strategic war industries, more and more blacks were exempted from these laws, but it was only in 1942 that the laws were somewhat relaxed. However, the resentment stayed.⁴⁴

38 Scholtz, 8, p. 333.

39 NJ Rhoadie and HJ Venter, *Die apartheidsgedagte: 'n sosio-historiese uiteensetting van sy ontstaan en ontwikkeling* (Cape Town, s.a.), p. 176.

40 Scholtz, 8, p. 333.

41 Paton, p. 312.

42 JC Smuts, "The basis of trusteeship in African native policy" in *New Africa Pamphlet No. 2*, *passim*.

43 Scholtz, 8, p. 337.

44 M Savage, "The imposition of pass laws on the African population in South Africa 1916-1984" in *African Affairs: Journal of the Royal African Society* 85(339), April 1986, pp. 181-205.

It is debatable to what extent World War II stimulated political consciousness amongst black South Africans, and African nationalism in general.⁴⁵ But the war in one way or another had an influence on the people of Africa. Many blacks and whites fought side by side, and for the first time many blacks realized that the white man was not invincible.⁴⁶

By September 1939 the African National Congress (ANC) had for nearly three decades fought for the political emancipation of black South Africans.⁴⁷ In December 1940 Dr AB Xuma was elected President-General of the ANC, and it was due to his devotion and inspiration that new life was breathed into the organization.⁴⁸ Although blacks had no political rights, the ANC did not prohibit its supporters to join the armed forces, because they did not want to do anything that would harm the Allied cause.⁴⁹ The South African Communist Party (SACP) was initially against South Africa's participation in the war, but when Germany invaded the USSR, changed its standpoint.⁵⁰ If they wanted to make their grievances known on a dramatic scale, the war had given blacks that opportunity, because with so many whites directly or indirectly involved in the country's war effort, and the war effort dependent on mines and industries with a predominantly black labour force, mass action would have had a terrible disruptive effect. But by September 1941 nothing of this sort had happened; as a matter of fact, black South Africans were on the whole committed to the Allied cause⁵¹ and many were directly or indirectly involved in South Africa's war effort.⁵²

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- 45 L Grundlingh, *Ex-servicemen and politics: a comparative study between black South African and British colonial soldiers after the Second World War* (paper delivered at a conference of the South African Historical Association, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg, 18 January 1990), pp. 6-8.
- 46 *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 7-9, 11-3. As far as the role played by blacks during the war is concerned, see e.g. LWF Grundlingh, *The participation of South African blacks in the Second World War* (D. Litt. et Phil. thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, 1986), *passim*.
- 47 See e.g. T Karis and GM Carter (eds.), *From protest to challenge: a documentary history of African politics in South Africa 1882-1964* 1 (Stanford, 1972), p. 61 et seq. and 2 (Stanford, 1973), pp. 3-154.
- 48 AH Murray, "Alfred Bitini Zuma" in *DSAB* 5 (Pretoria, 1987), p. 902.
- 49 Murray and Stadler, p. 264.
- 50 N Weyl, *Traitor's ends: the rise and fall of the communist movement in Southern Africa* (Cape Town, 1970), pp. 83-4.
- 51 See e.g. Department of Historical Papers (University of the Witwatersrand Library, Johannesburg), South African Institute of Race Relations Collection, B56.1: "A draft manifesto"; Killie Campbell Africana Library (Durban), GH Nicholls Papers, File no. 48 (War Debates): Document KCM3755, p. 4.
- 52 All told, 123 131 "non-white" South Africans took part in the war as full-time volunteers,

So, by September 1941, Smuts was also in control of the situation as far as black politics was concerned.⁵³ However, with black urban numbers rising, the political conflict potential in the country grew steadily. The UP could not or would not address the race problem and consequently more and more whites gradually became convinced that in the place of segregation, a new political dispensation was necessary. As white fears concerning job preservation and the potential swamping of whites by blacks in the cities grew, HNP supporters started to regard that party's new race policy, namely apartheid, as the alternative solution to South Africa's problems.⁵⁴ HNP supporters believed that the flow of blacks to the "white cities" could and had to be stopped, and that "unnecessary contact" between white and "non-white" had to be avoided. From 1910 until the 1940s the nationalistic-minded Afrikaner's struggle against the real or imagined threat posed by British imperialism dominated white politics in the Union. During the war years, however, the race question replaced the constitutional question as the dominant ideological question in white politics, and apartheid became the new political and ideological rallying point of the then deeply divided Afrikanerdom.⁵⁵

5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

By 1939 South Africa's economy was basically on a sound footing. The war years that followed were crucial in South Africa's economic and social development and the subsequent political shaping of the country.⁵⁶ In an effort to transform the country's economy into a war economy, it was necessary to divert manpower and material resources from peace-time objectives to warlike ends, to maintain and strengthen the civilian economy in spite of this, and to resist enemy efforts to weaken the country's economy or its warlike resolve. Under the

albeit in a non-combatant capacity. *Militaria* 19(3), 1989, p. 47; SESA 11, p. 525.

- 53 During World War II the so-called Indian question was also brought to a head, but that was only after September 1941. See e.g. V Wetherell, *The Indian question in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1946), *passim*. As far as coloured politics are concerned, the first two war years were also very quiet.
- 54 JPC Mostert, *Die politieke, maatskaplike en ekonomiese implikasies van swart verstedeliking in Suid-Afrika, 1939-1948* (D.Phil thesis, University of the Orange Free State, 1985), pp. 135-46.
- 55 A Wessels and ME Wentzel, *Die invloed van relevante kommissieverslae sedert Uniewording op regeringsbeleid ten opsigte van swart verstedeliking en streekontwikkeling* (Human Sciences Research Council report, Pretoria, 1989), pp. 53-66; JA du Pisani, "Die Suid-Afrikaanse grondwetlike bedeling: partypolitieke alternatiewe" in Mostert (ed.), p. 243.
- 56 D Killingray, "War and society in Africa since 1800" in *South African Historical Journal* 25, November 1991, p. 146.

Emergency Finance Regulations of 9 September 1939 exchange control was introduced, thereby restricting the transfer of funds and checking direct and indirect trade with hostile countries. In the light of the strenuous opposition against the Union's war effort by a section of the white population, part of the country's war effort was directed at ensuring that this opposition would not acquire sufficient strength to destroy either the country's will or ability to continue playing its part in the Allied war effort. Consequently several civil defence units were established, for example the Essential Services Protection Corps for non-combatant guard duties, the part-time Civilian Protection Services (including special constables or Civilian Guards), as well as part-time military units, for example the National Volunteer Brigade and National Reserve Volunteers.⁵⁷

Goods denied to an enemy may also represent important segments of export markets lost. South African exports which were particularly vulnerable were wool (with large markets in Germany, Italy, Japan, France and Belgium) and fruit (difficult to transport and distribute in war conditions). However, the Union's income from wool export was assured by the British government which bought all wool offered for sale at competitive prices, while the loss of export markets for fresh fruit was met in part by its export in canned or dried form or as jam, and in part by an expansion of internal markets resulting from fuller employment.⁵⁸

Fresh and canned fruit was supplied to the Allied troops visiting the country on their way to North Africa and the East, and vast quantities of canned fruit, vegetables, meat and jam, as well as army biscuits, were produced to supply the Allied forces in the different operational areas (for example 63 000 tons of jam and tinned fruit during the course of the war).⁵⁹ The agricultural sector was under great pressure to meet the demands. Matters were complicated because so many black farm labourers left for the cities where industries offered better salaries, but mechanization of production methods made farmers less dependent on black labour. Serious drought during the first war years affected agriculture, in particular maize production.⁶⁰ By September 1941 there were already signs of food shortages, but otherwise agriculture was in a fairly flourishing position.⁶¹

57 SESA 11, p. 524.

58 *Ibid.*

59 *Ibid.*, p. 513; Martin and Orpen, p. 93.

60 Murray and Stadler, p. 265.

61 See e.g. JM Tinley, *South African food and agriculture in World War II* (Stanford, s.a.),

The fall of Belgium and France had a startling effect on the Allies' supply of coal, and by 1941 the South African coal-fields were almost the only readily available source of this precious fuel other than Britain's own overtaxed mines. Far away from the main theatres of war, the Union's mining industry could uninterruptedly continue with production, increasing it where necessary and possible.⁶² The gold-mining industry also made an enormous contribution to the country's war effort. Although the industry was only allowed the minimum supplies necessary to continue existing production, and virtually nothing for development, gold production was increased to record levels, thereby not only improving South Africa's balance of payments, but also increasing Britain's financial resources.⁶³ The Smuts government was able to keep labour peace in the mining industry during World War II, ensuring this industry's prominent contribution to the country's war effort.

World War I put South Africa on the road of industrial development,⁶⁴ but it was the Second World War that brought this process to full fruition. On 24 November 1939 Dr HJ van der Bijl was appointed Director-General of War Supplies, the biggest challenge of his career. For the next six years Van der Bijl did this exacting work with characteristic skill and dedication - and without remuneration. With his broad knowledge and administrative ability he saw to it - at a time of disruption - that industrial production progressed smoothly. Although his terms of appointment gave him almost authoritarian powers over industry, Van der Bijl wisely decided on co-operation instead of coercion. He took the trade unions - at the beginning of the war still all white - in his confidence, and they offered their whole-hearted co-operation in the war effort.⁶⁵

Van der Bijl made a survey of the Union's industrial potentialities, appointed a number of committees and subcommittees to deal with the various branches of production, brought into being a central organization for technical training, decentralized new industries as far as possible, and made sure that nothing was done that would hamper the natural development of the country.⁶⁶

passim.

62 Martin and Orpen, p. 136.

63 SESA 11, p. 524; Krüger, p. 214; WS Churchill, *The Second World War 2* (London, 1953), p. 441.

64 From 1911-1921 the number of industries in the country increased from 2 473 to more than 7 000, and the gross output from £17 249 000 to £98 914 000. JSM Simpson, *South Africa fights* (London, 1941), pp. 105-6.

65 DSAB 2 (Cape Town, 1972), p. 769; SESA 11, p. 512; Simpson, pp. 110-1.

66 Simpson, pp. 110-2.

And obviously he fully utilized the services of the Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM) and the South African Iron and Steel Industrial Corporation (ISCOR), both industries playing a major role during the war. Fairly safe from direct attacks, industrial development in the country could take place unhindered.

In 1940 the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) was established under Van der Bijl's chairmanship to encourage and finance new industries, a task to which Van der Bijl applied himself with characteristic enthusiasm and with great success, placing the country's industrial growth on a firm footing.⁶⁷ Because of the war, the flow of imported goods all but stopped, stimulating local industrial growth. The great number of Allied servicemen who visited the country, a high rate of employment, and the fact that many black and white women for the first time entered the labour market, also contributed to the growth.⁶⁸

By September 1941 the South African economy had not been affected that much, but the foundation for a war economy and for massive war production during the rest of the war years, had been laid.⁶⁹ After the cessation of hostilities, industrialization continued. Together with the gold-mining industry, the transport industry (as represented by the South African Railways and Harbours - SAR and H) stand out for their enormous contributions to the overall war effort.⁷⁰ The outbreak of war once again emphasized how important South Africa's harbours, as well as the Cape sea-route, are. With Italy's entry into the war on 10 June 1940, virtually all Allied personnel and supplies had to be sent to North Africa via the Cape route. The vital strategic importance of the Cape sea-route meant that in due course the Axis powers would launch a military onslaught against it, bringing the world conflict to the South African coast, and straining the repair facilities of the SAR and H even further.

During the first two war years the SAR and H had the opportunity to extend its wartime facilities gradually, enabling them to render excellent services during the last four difficult war years. By the end of the war about 400 convoys,

67 Murray and Stadler, p. 264; DSAB 2 (Cape Town, 1972), p. 769.

68 Murray and Stadler, p. 265.

69 See in general J vd B Breedts, "Die Suid-Afrikaanse oorlogseconomie gedurende die Tweede Wêreldoorlog" in *Militaria* 13(1), 1983, pp. 46-66 and 13(2), 1983, pp. 1-18.

70 Martin and Orpen, p. 350. See in general also *We fought the miles: the history of the South African Railways at war 1939-1945* (s.l., s.a.), passim; RJ Bouch, "The railways and the war effort" in *Militaria* 5(2), 1975, pp. 66-75.

more than 50 000 ships with a total tonnage of more than 200 million tonnes, and about six million military personnel visited South African ports, Durban receiving about half of them. At the beginning of hostilities, Durban's graving dock was the biggest of its kind between Gibraltar and Singapore, and the only one in South Africa capable of taking a battleship. Apart from badly needed stores that were shipped in and the refuelling of ships, about 10 000 merchant ships were repaired in South African harbours during the war, as well as about 3 000 warships.⁷¹ There was not a single serious accident at any South African port during the war.⁷² The increase in the volume of sea-going traffic round the Cape may be gauged from the rise in value of South African produce supplied to provisioning ships, for example from £142 209 in 1939 to £5 381 015 in 1942.⁷³

War conditions also affected the demand for transportation within the country. So for instance the SAR moved an average of 33 429 906 tonnes of goods per annum for the five years preceding the war, compared with 40 302 645 tonnes for the freight year 1940-1941.⁷⁴ Over and above their normal activities, the SAR and H workshops were called upon to produce military material. They also converted whalers and trawlers into minesweepers and anti-submarine patrol vessels. At the beginning of the war, two out of four examination vessels at South African harbours were operated by SAR and H crews, and until the middle of 1942 boom defences at harbours were installed and maintained by the SAR and H.⁷⁵

On the eve of war there was for all intents and purposes no armaments industry in South Africa. By September 1941 the situation had completely changed for the better, with the country's fledgeling armaments industry not only supplying the UDF with arms and ammunition, but even exporting to other Allied countries. The reasons for the success are manifold, for example Van der Bijl's appointment as Director of War Supplies; by 1939 the country had a fairly good basic industrial infrastructure which to a large extent could be applied for the production of military material; the country had a well-established explosives industry; the SAR and H had facilities and well-trained personnel

71 Martin and Orpen, p. 137; HR Gordon-Cumming, "Unpublished chapters from the official history of the SA Naval Forces during the Second World War" in *Militaria* 22(1), 1992, p. 7.

72 Martin and Orpen, pp. 136-7, 219, 329, 352; LCF Turner et al., *War in the southern oceans 1939-1945* (Cape Town, 1961), p. 258.

73 SESA 11, p. 513.

74 This increased to about 50 million tonnes during the last year of war. Martin and Orpen, p. 134: "Railways" in SESA 9 (Cape Town, 1973), p. 236.

75 SESA 9, p. 236; Gordon-Cumming, pp. 4-5. 38.

that could be utilized in producing arms. Furthermore there were people who even before the war did their best to make the country less dependent on imported arms and ammunition, which led to the formation in 1937 of the Union Council for War Requirements that had to investigate the possibility of manufacturing military material in the country. Useful groundwork was done, until the Council ceased to function by the end of 1939, its work being taken over by the Director-General of War Supplies.⁷⁶ Other factors contributing to the Union's armament manufacture success story are, inter alia, the fact that Smuts regarded the manufacturing sector - besides the building up of the UDF - as the most important corner-stone of his war effort, mobilized the best expertise for that purpose, and gave them all possible support.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the country was fortunate in having vast raw material resources, including ore of the purest grade. Van der Bijl saw to it that nobody was to make a fortune out of war supplies, and consequently the UDF was provided with equipment of the highest quality at the lowest possible cost.⁷⁸

After Dunkirk and the return of the British Expeditionary Force to their homeland - minus most of their equipment - the chances were slimmer than ever before that Britain would be able to provide South Africa with a vast amount of military material. Consequently, May and June 1940 saw the full-scale mobilization of South Africa's industries for wartime production. Italy had by then also entered the war, and the UDF had to take the initiative against the new enemy in East Africa as soon as it could. Prodigious strides had been made during the first months of war, but because the Union could not manufacture everything it needed, a purchasing mission was sent to the USA in an effort to obtain - in collaboration with the British Purchasing Mission - what could not be produced locally.⁷⁹

76 E Pienaar, *Enkele ekonomiese aspekte van die voorsiening van krygsvoorrade aan die Unieverdedigingsmagte met spesiale verwysing na die produksie van krygsvoorrade in die Unie van Suid-Afrika gedurende Wêreldoorlog II (1939-1945)* (D. Comm. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1964), pp. 118-22; CJ Nöthling (ed.), *Ultima ratio regum (The last argument of kings): artillery history of South Africa* (Pretoria, 1987), pp. 385, 387, 389.

77 SL Barnard and AH Marais, *Die Verenigde Party: die groot eksperiment* (Durban, 1982), p. 57.

78 Simpson, pp. 131, 133.

79 Martin and Orpen, pp. 53-4; Pienaar, pp. 19-24; 33-43; Nöthling (ed.), pp. 385, 387; Breedt, 13(1), 1983, pp. 53-4. See also the National Archives (Pretoria), Smuts Papers, vol. 134: several progress statements, circulars, reports, etc; Manuscript and Archives Department (University of Cape Town), Industrial Manpower Papers, vol. 4: War Committee minutes.

Production figures for arms and ammunition produced in South Africa speak for themselves. By the end of 1939 a total of 553 armoured cars had been manufactured, in 1940 1 876 and in 1941 1 573.⁸⁰ On 16 February 1941 the first battery of 3,7-inch pack howitzers was handed over to the UDF. By 1941 250 3-inch mortars were produced every month.⁸¹ In the course of 1941 10 918 bayonets were manufactured, and by 1941 about 35 000 hand-grenades every week. Ammunition production increased steadily. By September 1940 37 million rounds of .303 ammunition had already been produced, and other ammunition included mortar bombs and a great variety of artillery ammunition. Aerial bombs ranging in weight from 20 pounds to 1 000 pounds were produced in great quantities, as well as even many more, although smaller, practise bombs. The total war production of hand-grenades amounted to 4 970 502 (many for export to Britain and India); total war production of .303 gun ammunition was 768 314 966 rounds; 2 568 652 mortar bombs were produced, as well as the following number of shell bodies for artillery pieces: 2-pdrs and 6-pdrs - 126 822; 13-pdrs - 41 361; 18-pdrs - 17 136; 4,5-inch and 6-inch howitzers - more than 40 000 - a grand total of more than four million shell bodies. Production was increased dramatically, for example from 42 164 in 1940 to 546 929 in 1941. The total number of aerial bombs produced was 3 660 216, including 3 057 717 practise bombs.⁸²

The first two war years were of crucial importance for South Africa's armaments production industry. Thanks to the zeal of Smuts and Van der Bijl, the foundation of this industry was laid within the space of only a few months. Although a vast amount of arms, ammunition and other products were produced during the first two years, this was the preparatory phase as far as the wartime industrial front is concerned, with full production commencing in 1942.⁸³ Even before the UDF was deployed operationally, the Directorate of War Supplies had won the first battle and first year of the war, eventually winning a series of campaigns on the war front - an industrial **Blitzkrieg** under Van der Bijl.

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- 80 Martin and Orpen, pp. 141, 327; R Cornwall, "South African armoured car production in World War II" in *Militaria* 7(3), 1977, pp. 30-41. By the end of hostilities 5 770 armoured cars had been produced, many being exported to India and Iraq.
- 81 Martin and Orpen, pp. 89, 142, 214, 353-4; Nöthling (ed.), p. 390. By the end of the war about 300 ordinary and pack howitzers had been produced, most of them being exported to India. A total of 11 323 3-inch mortars, as well as 100 2-pdr and at least 300 6-pdr anti-tank guns were also produced during the war.
- 82 Martin and Orpen, pp. 91, 142, 177, 353-4; SESA 11, p. 513; Breedt, 13(1), 1983, p. 55; Nöthling (ed.), p. 391.
- 83 Martin and Orpen, p. 212.

Many articles formerly imported were produced locally during the war, including even precision instruments, and the stimulation which was then given to the manufacturing potential of the country remains to this day. As was the case in the rest of Africa, World War II was a time of social and economic pressures in South Africa. It spurred on intensified industrial growth that gave to secondary industry an unprecedented importance in national life. The proportion of blacks among factory workers increased greatly, and the flood of new emigrants to the "white" cities swamped the existing locations and townships. The war also gave more bargaining powers to black workers than ever before,⁸⁴ and industrial employment increased dramatically.⁸⁵

Increasing economic integration had social and political implications, with whites feeling more and more threatened by the so-called "black danger". Black workers demanded higher wages and black trade unions were formed to look after their interests.⁸⁶ The Industrial Conciliation Act (Act 11 of 1924) legalized trade unions, but excluded blacks. However, by the end of World War II, there were 119 black trade unions with about 158 000 members in the country's seven largest cities. Not even military victory meant a rapid return to industrial and commercial normality,⁸⁷ as a matter of fact, there was hardly any aspect of South African life that was not deeply affected by the war.

South Africa's exports increased dramatically during World War II, especially because of the production and export of military material. Official purchases by, or on behalf of, foreign governments amounted to £82 million, of which the Eastern Group Council (with headquarters in New Delhi) took £60 million, Britain's Ministry of Food £11 million, and the Ministry of Aircraft Production £9 million.⁸⁸ However, the Union's war effort cost an enormous amount of money. The Minister of Finance, JH Hofmeyr, adopted the policy of meeting defence expenditure half from taxation and half from loans. The net

84 B Freund, *The making of contemporary Africa: the development of African society since 1800* (Basingstoke, 1986), p. 262.

85 From 1939 to 1945 with more than 50 %, with the number of black factory workers increasing from 270 000 to 457 000 from 1936 to 1946. Freund, pp. 187-8; Grundlingh, p. 396. From 1936 to 1946 the number of blacks in "white" cities increased by at least 550 000, and the percentage of all blacks who were urbanized increased from about 17,3 % to 21,56 %. P Smit and JJ Booysen, *Swart verstedeliking: proses, patroon en strategie* (Cape Town, 1982), pp. 38-44.

86 Mostert, pp. 102-22.

87 Martin and Orpen, p. 324.

88 SESA 11, p. 512.

public debt increased by £299 million, but the external debt was reduced from £101 million to £18 million. During the 1940-41 financial year, about £55 million was spent on defence (in sharp contrast with the £6,5 million spent during the previous financial year), and in 1941-42 £84 million.⁸⁹ Opposition against Hofmeyr's financial policy gradually grew, but later developments have vindicated his disregard of his critics.⁹⁰

6. SOCIAL CONDITIONS⁹¹

Social conditions in South Africa during the war were interwoven with the economic and other matters already referred to, including increased black urbanization and Smuts' security measures. Far away from the main theatres of war, the person in the street in general did not appreciate the fact that the Union was involved in a war requiring total effort.⁹² On the one hand the continuation of sports meetings and other forms of entertainment created an air of unreality, but on the other hand it made a contribution in keeping morale high on the home front. But people became smug: the Union, although contributing to the Allied war effort, to a certain extent benefited economically, but was spared the ravages of war. Italy's and Japan's entry into the war brought the conflict nearer to South African shores, but by September 1941 there were - with the exception of German surface raiders that had sunk fourteen ships⁹³ - no operations within 1 852 km (1 000 nautical miles) of South African shores, and the UDF's operational losses until that time were negligible.

Gradually the war did affect the lives of all South Africans. Inflation increased from 0 % in 1939 to 3,24 % in 1940 and 4,48 % in 1941,⁹⁴ and the wholesale and retail price indexes rose. On 29 August 1941 a price controller was appointed. Prices would undoubtedly have risen much more had it not been for price, rent and certain wage control measures (mitigated by compulsory cost-of-living allowances), but the latter could not stop the rising cost of living altogether.⁹⁵ Import control was established in August 1941, but it was after

89 Pienaar, p. 375. Military costs rose to about £210 million in 1942-43, £228 million in 1943-44, and £241 million in 1944-45. It then fell to £105 million in 1945-46.

90 AL Harrington, "Jan (Frederik) Hendrik Hofmeyr" in DSAB 2, p. 312.

91 See in general e.g. M Bryant, *As we were: South Africa 1939-1941* (Johannesburg, 1974), *passim*.

92 Martin and Orpen, p. 160.

93 See e.g. Turner et al., fold-out map opposite p. 21, and pp. 63-9.

94 GL de Wet (ed.), *Inflasie in Suid-Afrika* (Durban, 1987), pp. 145-6. By 1942 it had increased to 9,01 %.

95 SESA 11, p. 525.

September 1941 that the people on the home front really started to feel the pinch, with the rationing of petroleum products, restrictions on travel, and various commodity controls. There was a general shortage of rice, tea, maize, wheat, sugar and meat, as well as of building materials, vehicles and fertilisers. Public resentment gradually grew.⁹⁶

Despite the food and other shortages, World War II was a time of economic prosperity in South Africa. Gold, wool, diamonds and certain other exports could still be sold overseas. Most important of all, the standard of living improved, in particular that of the poorer classes (especially the poorer whites, many of them Afrikaners); as a matter of fact, the war played an important role in solving the "poor white problem". Full white employment was provided for the duration of the war.⁹⁷ Although the war also provided jobs for many blacks, their social conditions were in general not as good as those of whites. Rapid black urbanization led to the deterioration of the housing position in black townships, aggravated the squatter problem, and caused many social evils.⁹⁸ Those Afrikaners whose economic and social position had been improved by the war, wanted to safeguard themselves with all possible means against "encroachment" by blacks, and consequently fell in with the HNP's apartheid policy.

After two years of war, social and other grievances in the black communities had not yet led to any strikes or unrest, but by the end of the war, black resentment had grown. Hardly any aspect of life in the Union was left untouched by the war; it had wrought a metamorphosis not only in industrial production, but in people's way of life.⁹⁹

CONCLUSION

The UDF's contribution towards the Allied war effort was on a much larger scale than during the Great War, and all arms acquitted themselves very well. By September 1941 the UDF had been transformed into an efficient battle-trained fighting force, poised to play a significant role during the rest of the

96 *Ibid.*, p. 524; PW Coetzer (ed.), *Die Nasionale Party 5: van oorlog tot oorwinning, 1940-1948* (Bloemfontein, 1994), pp. 429-33; Krüger, p. 219; Breedt, 13(1), 1923, pp. 62-6.

97 J Dagut, *An updated perspective on urbanization of the white population in South Africa 1904-1948* (paper delivered at the fifth biennial conference of the Economic History Society of Southern Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, 22 July 1988), p. 14; Krüger, p. 226.

98 Wessels and Wentzel, pp. 54-7.

99 Martin and Orpen, pp. 324, 350.

war.¹⁰⁰ On the home front, the South African economy had within the space of two years been transformed into a war economy with a vibrant armaments industry, not only to a great extent providing in the needs of the UDF, but also exporting military material to other Allied countries. The large-scale industrialization which took place led to a shortage of workers, so that influx control measures were somewhat relaxed, which in turn led to the rapid urbanization of thousands of blacks, many of whom had to live under very poor socio-economic conditions. Black frustrations and political consciousness gradually grew, but thanks to the ANC's and other political organizations' support of the Union's war effort, the Smuts government did not have much to fear from the black masses. In the white political arena, the war sparked off a violent internal political struggle, not only between the UP and the HNP, but also amongst Afrikaners themselves. The OB, and especially its extremist offspring, the Stormjaers, as well as charismatic individuals like Robey Leibbrandt, posed a real threat to internal order, but Smuts acted swiftly, and by September 1941 the internal security situation was well under control.

After two years of war, South Africa was fully committed to and involved in the struggle against the Axis powers. Smuts had not only laid the sound economic and military foundations for the success which was to follow during the rest of the war, but had also consolidated his political position in the country, and had - just as during World War I - emerged as a leading figure amongst the Allied statesmen and commanders. In his triple capacity as Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and *ipso facto* officer commanding the UDF, Smuts fully threw his amazing energy into his country's war effort. In his seventieth year, Smuts' great hour had come. For the first time in his career, he had the power to truly shape the destiny of his country. Like Churchill in Britain in 1940, Smuts was the right man at the right time to take the reins and lead his country in a troubled time. Smuts, Van der Bijl and Van Ryneveld (the UDF's Chief of General Staff) formed a formidable triumvirate, ably assisted by Hofmeyr, putting the country on a sound war footing within a short two years.

During the Second World War Smuts proved to be one of the most remarkable and far-sighted leaders South Africa has ever produced, as well as

¹⁰⁰ As far as the building up and utilization of the UDF in the period September 1939 - September 1941 is concerned, see A Wessels, "Die opbou van die Unie-Verdedigingsmagte in die tydperk September 1939 tot September 1941" in *Journal for Contemporary History* 19(3), December 1994, pp. 1-22 and A Wessels, "Die aanwending van die Unie-Verdedigingsmagte in die tydperk September 1939 tot September 1941" in *ibid.* 19(4), June 1995, pp. 1-23.

the South African who so far has played the biggest role and enjoyed the most prestige on the international stage. Smuts' numerous foreign visits and his holistic philosophy enhanced his reputation as statesman of world format. He was one of Churchill's closest confidants during the war, and Franklin D Roosevelt, other statesmen and military commanders also attached great importance to his ideas on strategic and other matters.¹⁰¹ Smuts was a valued friend of the British royal family and someone whose opinion carried weight in Britain.¹⁰² In recognition of his contribution to the Allied war effort and his country's role at that stage, Smuts was appointed a Field Marshal in the British Army on 24 May 1941 (Empire Day and Smuts' 71st birthday), the only former enemy of Britain on which such an honour has been bestowed. In due course Smuts also received many orders, decorations, the freedom of cities and other marks of honour.¹⁰³ Throughout the war he stood rocklike, convinced of the justice of the Allied cause and of ultimate victory. With great distinction he played the role of war leader and elder statesman.¹⁰⁴ As was the case with the rest of the world, South Africa was not left untouched by the war. From 1939 to 1945 the country had increased in prestige, self-confidence and prosperity, but politically, demographically and socially the situation had become more complicated. In the short term, Smuts consolidated his political position and it seemed as if his position was stronger after the 1943 election than before. But that was not necessarily the case, because the result was in more than one way an artificial one which did not reflect the government's true standing. In that same year the ANC's Youth League was founded, with amongst its leaders people like Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu.¹⁰⁵

Slowly but surely the race question was brought to a head and World War II's medium-term political consequences only manifested itself during the 1948 general (albeit basically white) election. The last world war had shown once again that Smuts liked the international stage more than local party politics. He was a moderate internationalist, a vision few of his fellow Afrikaners shared.

101 See e.g. cablegrams between Churchill and Smuts, etc. in Churchill, 2, pp. 130, 194, 389; 3 (London, 1953), pp. 32, 226; 6 (London, 1956), pp. 225, 251, and also O Geysers, "A Commonwealth prime minister: General Jan Christiaan Smuts" in *The Round Table* 320, 1991, pp. 431-6.

102 See e.g. Churchill, 5 (London, 1954), p. 127; Churchill - Eisenhower, 21 September 1943 (telegrams).

103 Churchill, 3, p. 594; Churchill - Smuts, 8 May 1941 (telegram); J van der Poel and SIM du Plessis, "Jan Christiaan Smuts" in *DSAB* 1, p. 753; *The Star*, 24 May 1941, p. 7; *Die Vaderland*, 26 May 1941, p. 4.

104 Krüger, pp. 224-5.

105 Karis and Carter, 2, pp. 98-102.

Since the dramatic war debate of 4 September 1939 Smuts exerted himself for his country's - and the Allied - war effort, and in due course for the structuring of a new world order. But he lost touch with his voters - for example their fear of being swamped by blacks in the cities. He underestimated the power of Afrikaner nationalism; he was not prepared to let Afrikaner interests weigh more than unity between Afrikaans and English speakers, or even the interests of the British Empire - and he lost the 1948 election.¹⁰⁶ The war had enriched the Afrikaner bourgeoisie, and they and many other whites, fearing the "black danger", gave support to the HNP's policy of apartheid. The defeat of Nazi Germany may have helped to discredit racism, but that message apparently did not get through to many white South Africans. And so the 1948 election ushered in the long-term political (and some of the other) consequences of World War II for South Africa: the era of apartheid.

106 AJ Posthuma, *Generaal JC Smuts en Afrikaner-opposisie 1939-1948* (D.Litt. et Phil. thesis, University of South Africa, 1990), pp. 176-277; Coetzer, pp. 596-701; Barnard and Marais, pp. 63-8.