



← When Parliament rose in March 1948 Smuts appeared to be in an invulnerable position. In a House of 153, he held 89 seats. Malan held 49, Labour 6, the Stallardites 3, the Independents 3, and three were held by the Natives' Representatives, Margaret Ballinger, Donald Molteno, and Douglas Buchanan. Thus Smuts on his own commanded an absolute majority, and on most issues could count on the support of the other fifteen non-Nationalists.*

Malan and his ally Havenga of the Afrikaner Party would have to win 28 new seats to command a majority. Such a swing would have been unparalleled in Union history. Therefore the United Party began its election fight in good heart. That does not mean to say there was no anxiety. Malan had climbed from 19 seats in 1934 to 49 in 1948. In 1934 the great issue was Anglo-Afrikaner cooperation, about which Malan was not much concerned. In 1948 the great issue was the future of white South Africa, of which Malan had made himself the champion. Smuts's Achilles heel was in the Afrikaans-speaking countryside, and he had already lost Hottentots Holland, while in 1947, J.B. Wolmarans of Losberg, smarting under the taunts of the Nationalists, went over to them at the end of the session.

In September of 1947 Malan launched a pre-election attack on Hofmeyr, and this was the signal for an anti-Hofmeyr press campaign. Hofmeyr wrote in his Diary,

'I can't help feeling that they are over-selling their hand and that the result may well be to facilitate rather than otherwise the adoption of a more liberal policy.**

Two days later he had a talk with René de Villiers, who had represented the FORUM at the Nationalist Congress in Bloemfontein. Of this he wrote,

'De Villiers...told me that Malan's attack on me evoked very little response, which seems to support my feelings that they have been over-playing this card.*³

*These figures are taken from ROUND TABLE, Vol. 38, p. 719.

**Diary, September 18, 1947.

*³Diary, September 20, 1947.

On Sunday, October 12, when he was feeling generally at peace with and in harmony with the world, he wrote,

(Such things as political attacks and misrepresentations, which seem to disturb others, leave me cold.)*

Did these attacks leave him cold? Some of them were so fierce, and so deadly, that others went hurrying to him to tell him of their deadliness. Was Hofmeyr so tough that he was left cold by attacks which were shaking his Party? It is almost impossible to believe.

On ~~September~~ November 19, 1947, the Nationalist paper DIE KRUIETHORING put fourteen questions to the Deputy Prime Minister.** It asked him what he meant by Christian Trusteeship; then the electorate would know the exact meaning of his policies. The questions were these:A

- 1. If natives had the ability, should they be trained as skilled workmen, with the same pay and conditions as whites?
- 2. Should educated natives have the right to supervise the work of white girls?
- 3. Should native workmen have the right to found their own trade unions?
- 4. Should natives enjoy the same academic and social rights at white universities as whites?
- 5. Should a native be allowed to become, for example, Chancellor of the University of South Africa?
- 6. Should natives enjoy the same conditions of service and pay as whites in the Public Service and the Railways?
- 7. Should qualified natives, immediately or eventually, enjoy the same voting rights as whites?

*Diary, October 12, 1947.

**Kruithoring means the powder horn used by the ^Ttrekkers.



8. Should such voting rights be extended to native women?
9. Should the pre-1936 vote be restored?
10. Should such rights be extended to the Northern Provinces?
11. Should natives be allowed to sit in Parliament?
12. Should these rights apply also to municipal and divisional elections?
13. Should native farm-workers be entitled to wages on the basis of "equal pay for equal work?"
14. Should the highest posts in agriculture, education, and the professions be open to natives?

#

Yes

No

□ To all these questions DIE KRUI THORING answered with a resounding NO. But, according to the editor, Hofmeyr answered YES. Yet the editor wished to allow him to answer for himself. The paper would therefore give him so much time, and if he was too busy to reply, it would assume that his answer was YES. The editor would not however announce that the Deputy Prime Minister wanted all these changes immediately, merely that he wanted to see them, within a short or a long time. The editor concluded, 'We wait, Minister Hofmeyr.'

yes

It was René de Villiers who brought the questions to Hofmeyr's notice. Hofmeyr refused to answer them. He said that questions should be put to a Minister in Parliament or at public meetings. He scribbled a note to de Villiers,

(It is childish for a paper to put a questionnaire to a Minister in its columns and then assume that when he hasn't replied to it he can be assumed to have answered to it what it would like the answers to be.*

The questions put by DIE KRUI THORING were difficult ones to answer. Most of them were moral questions, and there was only

*The note is in some places difficult to decipher. It can be found in the Hofmeyr Papers, University of the Witwatersrand Library, in the file Parliament Election Propaganda, 1948.

one answer that Hofmeyr could give to them. It is both fascinating and terrible to think that to every question to which Hofmeyr would answer Yes, DIE KRUTHORING would answer No, and would not only be proud of it, but would think it morally justified.

Equally fascinating and terrible was Hofmeyr's own situation, for his political answers to these questions and his moral answers would have been hard to reconcile. In fact his answers as Deputy Prime Minister would not have been Yes, they would have been Yes, but..., which answers are embarrassing to others, and humiliating to oneself.

Hofmeyr's failure to answer was used as ammunition against him. But so were his answers to others and earlier questions. The National Party Information Office in Cape Town produced a famous pink pamphlet called 'Meet Mr. Hofmeyr.'* It quoted his speech in the famous debate of 1936, where he declared that he objected to 'a citizenship which has the marks of inferiority in clause after clause of this Bill.' It quoted his ~~now~~ famous remark in the Hottentots Holl- and campaign about the representation of 'natives by natives, and Indians by Indians.' When Strijdom had asked him in Parliament in 1946 to endorse white supremacy, he had replied, 'On that basis there can be no lasting relationship between the races.' When Erasmus had asked him in Parliament in 1947 whether he wanted the trade unions to be free to allow all races in one union, the Minister had replied, 'if they wish it so, then very well.' When in 1937 Strijdom had advocated job reservation, Hofmeyr would have none of it.** In that same year Hofmeyr had told a meeting at Ceres that he would not be a member of any Government which legislated against mixed marriages.

And this was the future Leader of the United Party! The pamphlet declared, 'The road he is following leads to equality, and the downfall of white South Africa.'

Meanwhile Hofmeyr scored a reasonable triumph in the small Transvaal country town of Naboomspruit. When questioned about baas- skap, white supremacy, he replied that it would have to give way in time to leierskap, leadership, based on white merits. He gave his

*It is a grievance of the National Party that its opponents always call it the Nationalist Party.

**Job reservation means the reservation of certain occupations to certain racial groups. It exists today. (1953)

answer with such force and sincerity that there were cries of bravo and Kolskoot.* He wrote that this in a typical backveld area, is an encouraging sign of progress.** He repeated this line of argument at Fochville, at an excellent meeting, which resurrected all his hopes and doubts about the succession. Two months earlier the Nationalists had forced him to abandon the meeting, but this time they stayed away.

□ Fochville has been a bad knock to the Nats and has made my own stock rise. There seems to be a better response to my ideas on colour questions than was believed to be possible. There seems to be just a chance that if Smuts went, I might carry the Party and the country with me - a better chance than has hitherto seemed to be the case - but still only a chance.*³

A few days later Strijdom poured scorn on Hofmeyr's idea of leadership. He quoted Hofmeyr as saying,

(We must not dominate, we must lead, I do not doubt that the European will always maintain the leadership on merit.)

To this Strijdom replied,

(I never knew that such stupidity could come from such a clever mind - either it is stupidity or political deception)*⁴

The United Party had to counter this anti-Hofmeyr propaganda, that Hofmeyr wanted to make South Africa a black man's country, and that he advocated the removal of all colour bars.*⁵ It reminded the voters in pamphlets and newsletters of Hofmeyr's declaration to the United Party Congress of November 1946, where he said:

□ I am not in favour of a policy of assimilation. I have repeatedly stated that the essential differences between Europeans and non-Europeans must be taken into consideration. The policy of Christian trusteeship I have in mind does not mean suppression, nor does it mean equality. It means the realisation of our

ital *Kolskoot means bull's eye.

**Diary, November 1, 1947.

*³Diary, November 7, 1947.

*⁴ NATAL MERCURY, December 8, 1947. *⁵ United Party white pamphlet, *undated* 615

responsibility not to ignore the interests of people of whom we are the guardians.¶

Before the campaign began in earnest Hofmeyr had a minor tussle with his own Craighall branch in Johannesburg North. His committee members deplored the fact that South Africans sent so much money out of the country to buy lottery tickets in Northern Rhodesia, Malta, and Ireland. They wanted a national lottery established which could make handsome grants to hospitals and charities. However much Hofmeyr had changed from the days of his early upbringing, both in his mother's home and in the Baptist Church, he was adamant on the question of lotteries. His view was that a lottery was immoral, because it catered for the desire to get much for little, and discouraged industry and thrift. He found however that he could not persuade his committee members to accept his view. He was so adamant on the point that instead of allowing himself to be embarrassed by his supporters, he embarrassed them, and did so deliberately. He wrote:

□ One has to go on making it clear that I am not prepared to stay in politics at the price of a moral principle. The dilemma then passes to the other side. They must decide whether they want me with my principles or are prepared to see me go.**

The question of lotteries never caused him so much difficulty as the so-called (native question). If Smuts had introduced lotteries, Hofmeyr would have rejected all idea of compromise. He would have resigned forthwith, and what is more, he would have done it even in the most anxious days of the war.

Hofmeyr stood fast on another point. There were members of the Cabinet who wanted to present a popular budget before the Party went to the country in May of 1948. But Hofmeyr dissented. He declared that it would be improper for the Government to present a budget just as it was about to go out of office. Malan attacked Smuts for not presenting a budget, but Hofmeyr declared he did so with his tongue in his cheek. Strauss considered that Hofmeyr made an error of judgment. There was a surplus and the Government could have used it to make further tax concessions. Such arguments Hofmeyr dismissed with a loftiness that was intensely irritating to many of his colleagues and friends, but Strauss was prepared to believe that it was his health rather than his conscience that was to blame.*³

~~*United Party white pamphlet, undated.~~

**Diary, December 19, 1947.

*³ Told to the writer.



On the very day that Hofmeyr arrived back from Parliament, he went off to Johannesburg North to meet Party leaders, and found their reports encouraging. But to his diary he committed the confession, 'I could be happy with either result.' He wrote enigmatically,

'And while I still think that it would be very unfortunate for the country - especially from the point of view of race relations - if the Nats were to get in, from other points of view the consequences would probably not be so serious as they would have been at one time.*'

Whatever he meant, he could not have been more in error. His own indifference to the result, he kept to himself, though there can be little doubt his mother knew of it. In her old age she was growing more and more disillusioned with the world and with mankind. No sooner was Germany conquered, than Russia and America were growling at each other. Man's genius seemed at its most brilliant in inventing tools for his own destruction. And here at home her son, who had lived an honourable, law-abiding, industrious life of service to his country, was the target for the bitter attacks of so many of his own people. She too had once believed that righteousness triumphed, but she found little comfort in the belief that righteousness was its own reward. She would say sombrely, 'But why should I worry? I have no children to bring up.' She had tasted power through her son, but the taste had turned from sweet to sour. Why should her son not withdraw? What thanks had he received for his devotion?

Until the campaign started in earnest, Hofmeyr had an easy time. He was in charge of Education and Mines, and there was almost nothing to do. He settled into new offices, and went through accumulated files. His two departments differed from Finance in that there were almost no decisions to make, especially on the eve of an election. 'If anything, he wrote, rather too little to do in the office.'

com

two and a half to one He was able to study the Johannesburg North Voters' Roll, and to predict a majority of 2 1/2 to 1. He was also able to study closely a statement by Malan, entitled, 'Colour Policy of the National Party.'³ Malan said that the choice was clear, between equality on the one hand, and on the other the separate development of racial groups, each with national pride, self-respect, and respect for

*~~Diary~~ March 27, 1948.

** Diary, April 3, 1948.

*³ ~~Published in~~ DIE BURGER, March 29, 1948.

others. Malan stated emphatically that the best way to achieve the happiness of all South Africa was to maintain and protect the white race, and that was to be the very root and fundament of Party policy. There would be residential, social, industrial, and political separation. Coloured voters would be placed on a separate roll, and elect white representatives to Parliament. All mixed marriages would be forbidden. THE Native Reserves would become the fatherland of the native, and all important services, including education, would be provided there, and not in the towns as at present. The native in our urban areas must be regarded as a visitor. Movement from country to town would be rigidly controlled. Native education would be Christian-National, and the money spent on it must be in proportion to the contribution made to the state income. Native representatives in the Lower House would be abolished, but retained in the Senate. As for Indians, they were aliens. As many as possible would be repatriated, and those that remained would be subject to rigid separation, and would have no representation in Parliament. Family allowances to Indians would be abolished, and drastic steps would be taken against Indians who incited non-white people against white.

That was Malan's programme. Hofmeyr had now before him the report of the Fagan Commission, which dealt particularly with the question of migratory labour and the pass laws and made many humane recommendations for reform. Nothing could have contrasted more vividly with Malan's programme than Fagan's report. Malan aimed at achieving the maximum racial separation in every department of life. Fagan aimed at recognising the fact of interdependence and adapting oneself to it. Hofmeyr wrote in Afrikaans at the bottom of the Malan statement these words, no longer a policy of uplift but one of oppression.

The Smuts election campaign was subject to one great handicap, namely that Louis Keesen was dead. What the United Party needed was one big and active mind that knew the danger of the Hofmeyr bogey that the ~~Nazis~~ Nationalists were creating, and would counter it confidently and aggressively, using the Fagan Report. Instead, the United Party kept on trying to prove that Hofmeyr was not as bad, not as extreme, as he was painted. Another mistake of the Party was to rake up Malan's past, which was a good deal more tolerant than his present. Yet hardly one of the Nationalists supported Malan for his tolerant past. They supported him because of his uncompromising present. The United Party was trying to show what Malan had thought in the past, whereas all the Nationalist Party cared about was what Malan thought in the present. This part of United Party propaganda was not worth the paper it was written on.

On April 10, it was officially announced that the General Election would be held on May 26, and the campaign began in earnest. DIE TRANSVALER announced that ~~Mr.~~ Fritz Steyn would oppose the Deputy

Prime Minister in Johannesburg North. Hofmeyr wrote :

□ (...the fight is now on, I find no difficulty about viewing it objectively. From the personal point of view I would not mind very much if I were out of the Government, or even out of Parliament, and altho' from the former point of view I am convinced that a Nat victory would be disastrous, I am content to let "God work his purpose out". But of course that does not mean that I shall not do my best, according to my lights to work for a U.P. victory.)*

He wrote further that the defeat of the Nationalists would help to clarify his own future. For the present he must wait and see

Of course Hofmeyr would do his best, but his best of 1948 would not be quite the same as his best of 1943. No one would know it though. Since his days as Administrator he had become known for his thoroughness and industry rather than for his ebullience, and he was still thorough and industrious. Some joy had gone, but the force of his will was as strong as ever. After going daily to Johannesburg for some days, he flew to the Cape and spoke at Worcester, where Dönges was fighting. Excellent meeting. Over 1000 present. Opposition very piane. Our chances better than I thought - but Dönges is of course a strong candidate.** Then to Caledon to another successful meeting. I think we should hold Caledon.** He flew back on the Sunday, finding the rest of the day quiet and peaceful.** At this time his dates in his diary were two days behind, and had been so for four days, and continued to be so for five days more before he corrected them. On April 20, with five weeks to go, he opened his committee rooms in Johannesburg North. A few days later Macdonald's biography, JAN HOFMEYR, HEIR TO SMUTS appeared, and it seemed, wrote Hofmeyr, to be attracting more attention than it deserves.** Yet for all that, Hofmeyr must have written appreciatively, for Macdonald wrote to him, I am glad that you and Mrs. Hofmeyr liked it.**⁶

One of Macdonald's motives in writing the biography was undoubtedly to strengthen Hofmeyr's claim to the succession. The succession was undoubtedly one of the prime issues of the election.

*Diary, April 10, 1948. ~~*Diary, April 10, 1948.~~

~~**Diary, April 16, 1948.~~

~~*³Diary, April 17, 1948.~~

~~*⁴Diary, April 18, 1948. 16-18.4.1948,~~

*⁵Diary, April 24, 1948.

*⁶ Macdonald to Hofmeyr, April 30, 1948.

If the United Party won, and Smuts retired, Hofmeyr would be Prime Minister, and South Africa, said the Nationalists, would become the home of 'a coffee-coloured race'.* Down in Natal, Mr. Charles Neate, M.P., one of the remaining Stallardites, declared that if Hofmeyr became Prime Minister, the United Party would be split from top to bottom. He said that United Party supporters and the Press were afraid of what would happen in the General Election if his ideas in regard to the colour question were known.** Were Hofmeyr's ideas not known? Certainly the Nationalists were trying to make them known. Mr. J.L. Brill, the Nationalist candidate for Mayfair, Johannesburg, brought out his own 'Meet Mr. Jan Hofmeyr' leaflet. In this he repeated the charges made in the earlier pamphlet, and concluded with a paragraph of grave warning.

□ 'In 1938 when I contested Christiana we started counting the votes the morning after the election. Just after midday when the result was about to be announced a cluster of Indians and non-Europeans had gathered next to the Courthouse. When the Magistrate announced that the United Party had beaten me there was GREAT JUBILATION among these non-Europeans.

S. caps

'Voters of Mayfair please think before you vote! The future of your children is at stake.'

Both Smuts and Hofmeyr thought it necessary, and more than once, to reassure the voters about the succession. Smuts spoke to a United Party Rally at Bloemfontein and told them he would carry on as long as he had the strength to do so. He said:

□ 'It has been suggested that I am trying to trick South Africa, that I am trying to get the people to follow me, while actually somebody else was going to take over.'

'This was really a war against Hofmeyr, and Hofmeyr is one of the best men we have ever produced in the country. They are trying to wound him in advance. If you want me to carry on I shall go on, but I do hate these attacks on Hofmeyr.'³

*Walker, HISTORY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, p. 7172.

**NATAL MERCURY, April 17, 1948.

*³NATAL MERCURY, April 22, 1948.

Speaking a few days later at Koster, a small country town in the Transvaal, Hofmeyr said,

(I do not aspire to the Premiership, and General Smuts has told me personally that he will remain Prime Minister as long as his health permits and as long as the people of South Africa want him.)*

Again at a meeting in Johannesburg North he said that nothing was further from the truth than the rumour that he would take over from Smuts. He was also reputed as saying:

□ I am supposed to be in favour of equality between Europeans and non-Europeans. That of course is nonsense. It is just as wrong as other allegations the Nats have made about me in the past.**

Fold
it was said,

While the official Nationalist propaganda was aggressively and persistently anti-Hofmeyr, there was also unofficial and underground propaganda. In and around Johannesburg, in Maraisburg, Westdene, Johannesburg West, and Mayfair, amongst the Afrikaner ~~workers~~ workers, a story was being circulated ~~that~~ by canvassers that Hofmeyr had an African mistress and that was why he resisted all attempts to ensure that marriage, adultery, and prostitution were made segregated activities. There was another story, known even in the clubs, that Hofmeyr had got into trouble at a boys' camp, and that only the intervention of Smuts had saved him from public exposure. There was a story about Smuts, too, that in fact he was a Jew, and that one only needed to study his portraits to see that this was true. Both these men desired only one thing with all their hearts, and that was to plough the Afrikaner under. If the United Party was returned to power, black men would take away jobs from white men, black men would supervise white girls, black doctors would give orders to white nurses. An election worker in Mayfair, Johannesburg, told the writer that if Hofmeyr ever came to power, black men would importune white girls in the street. The RAND DAILY MAIL declared that the unofficial campaign in these parts was brilliantly organised.**³

Hofmeyr was not much troubled by such scurrilousness in Johannesburg North. His constituents had known him so long and so well that the spreading of such stories would have aroused only anger. He held several meetings in his constituency, and his success seemed

*NATAL MERCURY, April 28, 1948.

**RAND DAILY MAIL, April 26, 1948.

~~***RAND DAILY MAIL, April 28, 1948.~~

beyond all doubt. At the end of April he visited the Western Transvaal, putting over his idea of Christian trusteeship; he repeated that he was not in favour of social and residential mixing, but he insisted that Christian trusteeship must be undertaken (in the interests of the ward). On April 27 he spoke at the Transvaal country towns of Ventersdorp and Koster, and was tired after travelling 250 miles; he recorded, (quite successful). The next day he went to the larger country town of Potchefstroom to a big meeting, and a (good reception). That night he went back to Pretoria, but the next day he returned to Klerksdorp, both journeys of over a hundred miles; he wrote, (another big and successful meeting. The Nats are almost uncannily well-behaved.)³

100

The RAND DAILY MAIL of May 3 declared that he had laid the bare of his alleged negrophilism, and that he had exploded the Nationalist theory that he would never be able to stand up to the rural voters.

of 30 April

On the next morning, he went back to Pretoria, and had a quiet afternoon and evening - very acceptable. On the following day, a Saturday, he was even luckier; a meeting at Rivonia, Johannesburg, fell through, and he was able to play tennis at the Farquharson's (and end the week in good trim). His friendship with Farquharson was like many of his sporting friendships, true, warm, and not too serious or deep. He was always welcome there, and no one would come to him in an agony to urge him to do something desperate before it was too late, or to ask him questions that demanded complicated and exhausting answers. The Farquharsons asked him there to relax, and protected him from all exacting conversation. On the Sunday he wrote in his diary:

I can't help feeling grateful that the election campaign has so far gone so well as it has done as far as I am concerned. Generally I am satisfied with the way in which things are going, but am not sure that the Nats might not be able to pull something out of the bag.

Twenty-four days to go. Back in Johannesburg again, a good Women's Rally, a very good meeting at Parktown North. Back to Pretoria for the Administrator's tea-party for Bremer Hofmeyr and

- ~~*Diary, April 27, 1948.~~
- ~~**Diary, April 28, 1948.~~
- ~~*³Diary, April 29, 1948. 27-29. 4. 1948~~
- ~~*⁴Diary, April 30, 1948.~~
- ~~*⁵Diary, May 1, 1948.~~
- ~~*⁶Diary, May 2, 1948.~~

the members of the Moral Rearmament Team. Then a bit of luck, for white South Africa observes a political truce for ten days from Ascension Day to Whitsunday, and no political meetings are held. What was more, the cricket season had opened, and he could again enjoy those pleasant afternoons at Government House, gossiping with the Governor-General. On the Sunday after Ascension Day he read the Moral Rearmament book, REMAKING THE WORLD. As was to be expected, he strongly approved the teaching to surrender and dedicate the will. He wrote:

□ Although I don't like the phrase Moral Rearmament, I recognise that the underlying teaching at once correctly analyses the world situation and indicates the answer. But the disturbing thought that comes to one from reading the book is that national campaigns launched in the past with every promise of changing the nation concerned seemed to have left little in the way of abiding results on the national scale.
...but we must continue to fight.*

He had grown less critical of the movement known first as the Oxford Group and later as Moral Rearmament. And why not? Had not he also been trying to change a nation? And what had been the abiding results? What could one do but continue the fight?

One politician at least did not observe the Whitsun truce. ~~Mr~~ J.L. Brill, the Nationalist candidate for Mayfair, was so outraged by the holding of a mixed meeting in the Kimberley Town Hall that he published a vigorous leaflet on the first day of the truce. It was headed in inch-high letters

S. caps centre
2. unit #

S.A. ENTERS A NEW EPOCH!

and below that in smaller but heavier print

centre each line

**MIN. HOFMEYR'S LIBERALISM TRIUMPHS
AT UNITED PARTY MEETING!
COLOUREDS & EUROPEANS ON U.P. PLATFORM**

*Diary, May 9, 1948.



Kimberley, Wednesday,
5th May.

indent 2 ems

The United Party held a mass meeting in the Kimberley Town Hall last night totally ignoring the colour bar. On the platform was Dr. H. Gluckman, Minister of Health, together with the candidate of the U.P., Mr. Harry Oppenheimer and numerous Coloureds, Indians, and Malaysians.

□ The audience consisted of Natives, Coloureds, Malaysians, Indians, Chinese, and Europeans, and the stage was decorated with banners condemning Nationalism by the Springbok Legion.

□ The chairman Mr. Graham Eden in welcoming the masses eulogised the spectacle as symbolic of the future nation of South Africa. (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

s. caps

ELECTORS, BEHOLD THE U.P.'S NATION OF TOMORROW

iral centred

Vote BRILL iral caps 2 units #

centred

for White Dominance.*

The Nationalists were conducting their campaign with great thoroughness. They had their own troubles, and these were of course magnified by those newspapers which supported the United Party. It was supposed that Malan and Havenga were having difficulties in working together. The RAND DAILY MAIL** reported that Malan had vetoed Havenga's nominee at Brakspan, ~~Mr.~~ Balthazar John Vorster, who had been a "general" in the Ossewabrandwag, and had been ~~put under house arrest by Smuts in 1941~~. It also reported that Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, editor of DIE TRANSVALER, and Nationalist candidate for Alberton, was having trouble with members of the Ossewabrandwag in his constituency; also that the Broederbond was interfering in the nominations, and had caused the sitting member for Bethlehem to be replaced. Three days later it was announced that ~~Mr.~~ B.J. Vorster was to be nominated at Brakpan after all.

Handwritten note: ~~the war~~ during the war

almost
It seems almost certain that the Nationalists, who naturally showed massive confidence in public, did not think they could win the

*I have not reproduced the entire text. The full text would not in any way amplify the meaning of the leaflet.

~~RAND DAILY MAIL~~
**for April 9, 1948.

elections. Barlow travelled with Malan on the plane from Johannesburg to Cape Town, and went and sat with him to talk about the prospects. Barlow reported Malan, who needed 28 seats to win a bare majority, as saying to him, Do you agree that we are going to capture 20 seats in the election? Barlow replied to Malan that he would not get 20 seats or anything like it; at the most he gave the Nationalists 57 all told, if they were lucky.* Barlow was full of praise for the way Hofmeyr was playing his part in the campaign. He wrote:

□ The more country audiences are addressed by the Deputy Prime Minister, it now seems, the worse it is going to be for Dr. Malan's party. The Minister fills the Bill, draws big audiences and is listened to by the country voter with rapt and respectful attention.**

Meanwhile the Nationalists continued to attack Hofmeyr relentlessly. Verwoerd's paper, DIE TRANSVALER, attacked him daily in the news, or the cartoons, or the editorials, on some days in all three. The words, liberal, liberalist, liberalistic, had become words of contumely, and the greatest of the liberals was Hofmeyr. *iral* Mr. Ben Schoeman, speaking at a Nationalist meeting in Vereeniging, said that if the United Party won the election, Hofmeyr would be Prime Minister, and that would be the end of the colour bar, and Ichabod with the country.*3 The next day Strijdom declared at Nylstroom that despite all denials, Hofmeyr's policy was equality; had he not in the famous debate of 1936 lamented that the most educated native would never get political equality, not even with the least educated white or coloured person?*4

At midnight on White Sunday the truce came to an end. Nine days more. Hofmeyr was glad that the end was in sight, but still happy to leave the outcome... in the hands of God.*5 The next day he travelled 270 miles to the country towns of Bethel and Witbank, and back to Pretoria; prospects seem good.*6 At the same time Smuts was speaking in the Johannesburg City Hall about the succession.

□ We are being told that this election is being fought for Mr. Hofmeyr and that I shall disappear in a very short time. I

*RAND DAILY MAIL, April 13, 1948.

**RAND DAILY MAIL, April 21, 1948.

*3DIE TRANSVALER, April 23, 1948.

*4DIE TRANSVALER, April 24, 1948.

*5Diary, May 7, 1948.

*6Diary, May 17, 1948.

am old and decrepit and I must disappear at almost any moment. Mr. Hofmeyr will lead the country and will grant equal rights to all people.*



ital He assured his audience that Hofmeyr would stand by the policies of the United Party. He made a joke about Hofmeyr being the chief target of the Nationalists, a joke which some thought had a more serious meaning. He said, 'I have to look at the Nationalist literature sometimes and find I have dropped out of the picture completely... My name is not even mentioned.' Smuts then switched to Afrikaans, and told his audience that the swart gevaar, the black peril, was an old horse that wouldn't run any more.**

Meanwhile Hofmeyr was everywhere assuring his audiences that it was the Nationalists who were choosing him as Prime Minister, not his own Party nor himself. He had been just as much opposed to mixed marriages as any Nationalist, but he did not believe in forbidding them by law. Nor had he ever wanted the disappearance of the colour bar, nor the emergence of a black South Africa.

On the Tuesday of that last week he went to his constituency, the next day to Boksburg, the next back to his constituency. Canvassers confidently predicted that he would win with a handsome majority. He wrote that he felt he was riding in homewards.** He added, also getting feeling that tide has definitely turned our way. Then the next day to two more country towns, Potgietersrust and Pietersburg; both good.** He wrote that as at Bethal he noticed that Government supporters were much more enthusiastic than in 1943. On the Saturday he travelled 400 miles, and thought his meetings at Louis Trichardt and Tzaneen went off well.** He wrote:

'It is a tremendous relief that this week is over, and that things have gone as well. I am very grateful.*⁵

He would have liked to have had one of his peaceful Sundays, but an old family friend had died at Grootvlei, 46 miles away, and he had to pay a visit of condolence. When he returned he wrote:

'This will be an important week in our history. The omens seem to me to be

*NATAL MERCURY, May 18, 1948.

**RAND DAILY MAIL, May 18, 1948.

~~*³Diary, May 20, 1948.~~

~~*⁴Diary, May 31, 1948.~~

*⁵Diary, May 23, 1948. 20-22.5.1948

~~*⁶Diary, May 23, 1948.~~

good. If only one can get a really decisive victory, our political development will be set on a sounder healthier course?*

Monday, May 24, and two days to go. It was a public holiday, Queen Victoria's birthday, shared by her with General Smuts. Hofmeyr played cricket at Government House, and that evening spoke in Pretoria in the Jewish Memorial Hall, to the most hostile audience he had yet encountered. When he predicted that on Wednesday South Africa would give General Smuts a birthday present in the form of the greatest victory he had ever had, students who had packed a large part of the hall, greeted his prediction with jeers and songs and cries of 'Vodka', to which he replied, Our friends have got themselves around some vodka or something.** He started to speak again, but the students resumed their singing, and after they had finished he said, Now that our friends have refreshed themselves with a little singing, I shall continue. Horak watched him anxiously, realising that this was not the old Hofmeyr who revelled in this kind of encounter, and brought the house down with his repartee. He was pale and sweating, and Horak could see that the fight was taking all his strength. As for the students, they were at last confronting the arch-enemy of Afrikanerdom and White Civilisation, and they shouted their hatred at him. For more than a month now they had read about Hofmeyr every morning in Dr. Verwoerd's DIE TRANSVALER. Had not Dr. E.G. Jansen, respected ex-Speaker, said that the swart gevaar, the black danger, was not the black people but the Hofmeyr policy? Had not DIE TRANSVALER pictured a beautiful Miss South Africa pleading with Hofmeyr to stop chopping down the colour-bar tree, while a gleeful black man danced and shouted, Jo, Mo! by's amper af, which meant So beautiful, it's almost down.**³ Had not Mr. Havenga said that Hofmeyr should stop explaining what he said about the Parliamentary colour bar, and explain what he meant by South Africa's Herenvolk mentality? And how could Hofmeyr compare Afrikaners who put their hands deep in their pockets for missionary work, with Judas Iscariot?***⁴ Hadn't the great Malan attacked Hofmeyr at Germiston, and the near-great Strijdom attacked him at Witbank, as the betrayer of white civilisation in Africa? Was it not Hofmeyr's liberalism that brought whites, Coloured people, Indians and Malays on to the same platform at Kimberley? Had not DIE TRANSVALER pictured Hofmeyr as a two-headed jackal, the one mouthing, Away with the Colour Bar, and the other, I am for Christian trusteeship?***⁵

And here was their enemy in the flesh. They shouted out questions to him about mixed marriages and mixed universities and

*Diary, May 23, 1948.

**NATAL MERCURY, May 25, 1948.

³In ~~DIE TRANSVALER~~, April 29, 1948.

⁴DIE TRANSVALER, April 30, 1948.

⁵~~DIE TRANSVALER~~, May 20, 1948.

mixed trade unions, and about 'educated natives' supervising white Afrikaner girls, but such was the noise that Hofmeyr could not answer them. Shouting above the din, he challenged them to prove that he had ever advocated equality between white and non-white. On the contrary, he was opposed to the two extremes of oppression and equality. While they were shouting at him, he was shouting at them that the Fagan Commission indicated a third course, namely, that of Christian trusteeship. Horak said to him, 'Mr. Hofmeyr, let's close the meeting,' but Hofmeyr said, 'Don't be silly.' He looked exhausted, and Horak was glad when the meeting came to an inconclusive end, and he could get Hofmeyr into the car and drive him home.

On the day before the election Hofmeyr was in his constituency, putting the finishing touches to his organisation. He was confident, and the Party was confident too. ~~THE FORUM~~ had published its forecast, United Party 74, Nationalists 58, Afrikaner Party 5, Labour Party 4, Independents 1, and the remaining 8 seats doubtful. Hofmeyr wrote in pencil against these figures, United Party 86, Nationalists 58, Afrikaner Party 4, Labour Party 5, Independent 1. It was only a game, and it depended on the heart as much as on the head. It was what boys and girls do before an examination; on bad days they predict for themselves a third class, on good days a first. Hofmeyr's days must have been all good. He left another card on which he had worked it all out, United Party 84, or 85, and even in a circle 90, which meant that Malan would return to Parliament weaker than he had left.* Hofmeyr always made these predictions at elections.

Meanwhile that fighting newspaper DIE TRANSVALER showed no signs of pessimism. On ~~May 24~~ it recorded unprecedented enthusiasm on the Witwatersrand for the Nationalist Party, and said that a big swing was already apparent. Malan sent out a last clarion call from Cape Town that the battle was for nothing less than the future of white South Africa. On ~~May 25~~ DIE TRANSVALER cartoon showed the dark and rising flood of Liberalism, Communism, and Equality that threaten to overwhelm South Africa, and urged readers, 'Save Her in time by voting Nationalist.'

Hofmeyr lacked no help on ~~May 26~~. He had represented the constituency for eighteen years and he had never suffered a setback. Polling began at 7 a.m. and there were no signs of apathy. Reports from other centres indicated that there would be a record poll all over South Africa. At his own polling stations there was abundant confirmation that he would win handsomely. At 8.0 p.m. polling closed, and now counting began. At 2.45 a.m. on ~~May 27~~, the Returning Officer announced that J.H. Hofmeyr had beaten F.S. Steyn by

*These forecasts are to be found ^{among} ~~in Box 9~~ of the Hofmeyr Papers, Library of the University of the Witwatersrand.

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two and a half to one

2 1/2 to 1

3281 votes in a poll of over 8,500. His prediction of $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 was close to the mark. The early results, always those in urban seats, were invariably United Party victories, but Hofmeyr was immediately aware of the fact that in these traditionally United Party seats, there had been a slight swing to the Nationalist Party, though not enough to disturb the huge U.P. majorities. In the afternoon, as the first rural results came in, it was clear that in the country the swing had become a landslide, especially in the Transvaal, but also to a lesser degree in the Cape. It was Smuts's Afrikaner countryside that was deserting him, following J.B. Wolmarans of Losberg when he left the United Party because it would not stand unequivocally for a white South Africa. The crowning disaster was when Smuts himself was announced defeated at Standerton by 224 votes, by a man whom he had forced to choose between his job and the Broederbond in 1944.

By evening it was clear that Smuts would not be able to command an absolute majority in the House. By the morning of the 28th it was clear that he would have no majority at all. Malan and Havenga between them won 79 seats, and commanded an absolute majority of 5 over all comers, including 3 Natives' Representatives. Between them they had taken 34 seats from the United Party and had driven that Party out of virtually every Afrikaans-speaking constituency in the country. Smuts's total had dropped from 89 to 65.

The disparity between the number of seats Smuts won and the number of votes he polled was remarkable. Malan and Havenga won 79 seats, with a total of votes 100,000 less than the total of votes for Smuts, who won only 65 seats. Smuts polled 50% of the total vote, and Malan and Havenga together polled 40%. This was due to the electoral provision that allowed rural seats to be under-loaded 15% and urban seats to be overloaded 15%. Thus Smuts was defeated because of the provision that he himself had advocated in 1909, and which many had urged him to abolish. Had he listened, he would have won the election of 1948. Another reason for this disparity between number of votes and number of seats was that many urban seats voted overwhelmingly United Party, and presented Smuts with spectacular but otherwise useless majorities.

After listening to the news at 7 a.m., Hofmeyr went into his mother's room, and said to her, 'We've just lost it!'* They did not speak much. What could she say who did not know whether to grieve or rejoice? What could he say, who had written, 'I could be happy with either result?' What did he feel? According to her, 'he never showed it much?'* But she said that he felt it deeply.

*Told to the writer by Mrs. Hofmeyr.

How does one feel when an age comes to an end? For it was that and nothing less. Smuts was almost beside himself. J.C. Smuts junior declared that the result shocked his father more gravely than any event he had ever witnessed. After Smuts had resigned on May 29 his son took him down to the farm in the bushveld, but his father's thoughts were far from the trees and the grasses. Hofmeyr wrote, it is a great blow to him - and he obviously feels it. Smuts told Hofmeyr at once that he did not want to carry on, and Hofmeyr, as in the far-off days of 1933, tried to tell him it was his duty. Hofmeyr came away seeing little chance that Smuts would take another seat - and from the personal point of view I doubt very much whether he can be expected to.* Of himself Hofmeyr wrote:

□ My own feeling is one of relief - it will be good to be able to take things more easily for a while. I think too that it will tend to make my political position easier, though it will be difficult in the first instance.*

Hofmeyr wrote also of the profound shock to many in his own circles. What made the shock more painful was the triumph of others, the roaring crowds on Pretoria's Church Square, the jubiliations in Potchefstroom, Witbank, Standerton, Bloemfontein, Worcester, Caledon, Stellenbosch, the blowing of the motor horns, the singing of the songs and the anthems, all the prayers and boasts and promises and new dedications of those for whom the dawn was breaking after a night of long despair.

Kruger in his book THE AGE OF THE GENERALS ^{later} wrote:

□ Apartheid overthrew Smuts.... It was the last desperate attempt of Afrikanerdom to stem the rising tide of colour. The electorate believed that the salvation of the white race in South Africa lay in entrusting the National Party with the defence by every possible means of their White heritage. White South Africa believed that the racial estate it had inherited in 1910 could still be made solvent, disregarding the unfavourable balance sheet. For a century and more Afrikanerdom had managed to preserve its life through heroic action. It now thought to prolong its existence by heroic thought against the whole world. The age of the Generals was past and

*Diary, May 28, 1948.

done with forever. African^{er}dom would endeavour to maintain its existence through an age of politicians.*

The first of the Age of the Politicians was Daniel Francois Malan, who, once taught by Smuts in the Sunday School at Riebeeck West, had been for almost forty years in political opposition to him. Malan, though he thought ill of Smuts's politics, recognised in him that strange quality of greatness. He recognised also that the General Election of 1948 was the tragedy of a great and illustrious life. In a message of thanks to his supporters, Malan said that the United Party had tried to use the prestige of General Smuts during the election to distract attention from the great and urgent problems that cried for solution. He said it was tragic to think that at this stage in his life, Smuts had thrown himself into the battle to protect another man, and had thus sacrificed himself.**

It was not only Malan who believed that Hofmeyr had cost Smuts the election. Others were beginning to believe it, not Hofmeyr's enemies, but his allies. Peace had not yet come to the tired man.

*Krüger, AGE OF THE GENERALS, P. 226.

**NATAL MERCURY, May 29, 1948.