



1939

← It was not only that Hofmeyr's self-doubt had returned. War was coming, and it was no time to form new parties. The urgent question was not what policies to follow in South Africa, but what Hitler would do in Czechoslovakia.

What would happen if Britain went to war with Germany? What would South Africa do then?

When Hertzog and Smuts went into Coalition, and later into Fusion, they had left grave constitutional problems unanswered. Could South Africa stay neutral when the King went to war? Was the Crown divisible or indivisible? Did neutrality in war mean secession from the Commonwealth?

In 1934 Hertzog and Smuts had hoped that the question would never need to be answered, that time would answer them. They had hoped that a generation of racial peace would find English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans thinking more and more alike. Hertzog went further. He believed that the League of Nations and the Kellogg Pact made the question of neutrality academic.

Hertzog now drew up a statement of policy in the event of war between Britain and Germany. South Africa would be neutral, but she would abide by the agreement which allowed Britain to maintain a naval base at Simonstown on False Bay.* Pirow first told Hertzog that Smuts would never agree, but later he recorded that although Smuts was startled, and asked time to consider the statement, he returned the following day to say that he and his colleagues would accept it. The quarterly review, ROUND TABLE, which would probably not have expressed such an opinion without consulting Hofmeyr, said that if war had come then, Hertzog, Smuts, Havenga, and Pirow would have been for neutrality. Van den Heever recorded that on September 28, 1938, the whole Cabinet agreed to Hertzog's statement.**

Hofmeyr wrote to Underhill: **

□ (...we had a specific ground for anxiety, as we did not quite know what our Government was going to do. According to the

*Several Cape Town suburbs are situated on False Bay.

**Van den Heever, GENERAL J.B.M. HERTZOG, p.691.

** 23.10.1938.

Prime Minister's view, which General Smuts now accepts, South Africa would not have been automatically at war if Great Britain went to war - it would have remained neutral while our Parliament met and decided whether we would declare war or not. Whether in such circumstances our Government would have advised Parliament to decide on war is not clear - in all probability it would have been acutely divided.*



The Cabinet decision was astonishing. Eight years, six years, five years earlier, English-speaking support for such a neutrality decision would have been impossible to obtain. Hertzog was entitled to look upon it as the crowning achievement of his lifetime. At last English-speaking South Africans was beginning to understand that independence meant independence, whether one belonged to a Commonwealth or not. One year later, with hindsight, Pirow changed his view of Smuts's concurrence. He wrote that Smuts accepted the statement merely to gain time and in the belief that a European war was still some distance off.**

For some reason Hofmeyr, who twenty years earlier had advocated the cause of an independent South African Republic, member of a group of equal sister states, with its own flag and President, now came out openly with the contention that if Britain went to war, South Africa would be at war also, unless she declared her neutrality.*³ If she declared her neutrality, she would in fact have left the Commonwealth. She had three courses open, neutrality, active participation, or passive belligerency.*⁴ He concluded that a nation could be passively belligerent only if her enemies allowed her to be.

Hofmeyr's argument had little effect. Today it seems archaic.*⁵ Whatever the Commonwealth now is, it is not an association of states bound to go together to war. When the time came for a decision, it would be made in passion and emotion. One of the sharpest comments on Hofmeyr's argument was made by Fred Thomas the cartoonist.*⁶ It showed Stallard seated at a tea-table with the Mad

*Hofmeyr to Underhill, 23/10/38.

**Pirow, JAMES BARRY MUNNIK HERTZOG, p. 227.

*³THE FORUM, November 23, 1938.

*⁴I cannot discover whether this is Hofmeyr's own phrase, or whether it had another origin.

*⁵That is, 1963.

*⁶In the SUNDAY TIMES, November 28, 1938.

Hatter and Dormouse and Marsh Hare of his Party. They are all recoiling in horror as Queen Hofmeyr enters wearing an indivisible crown, and Stallard is crying, Go-Back, the Queen's wearing OUR crown!

ital
e.e.

So Parliament assembled in February 1939 in the shadow of grave unanswered questions. Malan on the one side and Stallard on the other were unequivocal. It was the United Party that was uneasy and uncertain. Its English-speaking members were restless for two reasons. They were afraid Hertzog would keep South Africa neutral, but they were also afraid of opposing him, because he was their only bulwark against Malan. Malan, aided by the great wave of Afrikaner feeling during the Voortrekker celebrations, was challenging Hertzog for the leadership of Afrikanerdom. Powerless as Malan appeared to be, he could strike fear into non-Afrikaner hearts. He struck fear into the hearts of Jews when his lieutenant Eric Louw, M.P. for Beaufort West, moved an Aliens & Immigration Bill, which would have discriminated against Jewish citizens, would have compelled aliens to carry registration cards, and would have forbidden changes of Jewish names. Louw was a slight man, and a speaker of considerable ability with a sharp humourless tongue. Until it became unacceptable to do so, he referred to non-white South Africans in contemptuous terms. Above all he was a master of the tu quoque, and developed to its perfection the argument, 'you say I am bad, but I shall now prove you are bad too.'

? repetition

Hofmeyr described Louw's Bill as 'Nazism at its crudest.'* The Lower House threw it out, only the Malanites voting for it; but it had struck fear into the hearts of many South African Jews, and they turned more than ever to the short, eloquent, untidy man who was always vigilant to champion their cause.

Hofmeyr was now on the mere periphery of events. He was out of the caucus and out of the Cabinet. There were many who would tell him what happened in the caucus, but since his estrangement from Smuts, there was no one to tell him what went on in the Cabinet, least of all in that inner circle where Smuts consorted oddly with Hertzog, Havenga, and Pirow. The country's attention had shifted from its own internal affairs to the crisis in Europe, from the particular issues of mixed marriages and separate areas to the universal issue of human freedom. Yet who could speak better on the universal issue than Hofmeyr, who had always tried to relate it to the particular? He chose a great occasion on which to do it, his installation as Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Escorted by his one-time Chairman, Sir William Dalrymple,

*SUNDAY TRIBUNE, February 5, 1939.

by Principal Raikes, and by the distinguished Vice-Chancellor, the Hon. Mr. Justice Feetham, and preceded by a learned procession in gowns and hoods of scarlet and blue and gold, Hofmeyr, ungowned, and dressed in a neat dark suit, walked to the platform amid the silent and standing congregation, and there was invested and robed as Chancellor. He then conferred degrees and diplomas on 300 students, of whom, said the RAND DAILY MAIL, None received more applause than a native, Mr. William Barney Ngakane, who received a diploma in social studies.

Hofmeyr then delivered a great address, as he always did when he deliberately avoided the props of memory. He told the congregation that the Chancellorship was to him the 'crowning glory', which was true, and that he had left the University in 1924 feeling that he was leaving a large part of himself behind, which was not. Raikes, listening to Hofmeyr's address between dozes, did not approve of this sentimental exaggeration. He had not opposed Hofmeyr's election, but he did not care for it. Neither of the two men cared much for each other at all, and both knew it. Mrs Hofmeyr would explain this by saying that Raikes was jealous of Hofmeyr's administrative ability, and she would add, 'Of course he is divorced.' which was not true, for Raikes's first marriage had been annulled by ecclesiastical authority. Raikes disapproved of Hofmeyr because he reckoned that the Minister of Education was criminally mean with money, and this disapproval was exacerbated by his belief that Hofmeyr was in some way paying back the University for past hurts. It was most unlikely that this was so; there was hardly a University principal in the country who thought Hofmeyr a generous Minister. Now however, Raikes's university had bestowed its highest honour on Hofmeyr, and few in the congregation would have guessed how little Chancellor and Principal cared for each other.

Hofmeyr did not take long to reveal his theme.)

'Undoubtedly the greatest conflict in the world today is the conflict between the spirit of democracy and the spirit of authoritarianism. In that conflict no University worthy of its great tradition can fail to range itself on the side of democracy.'

Hofmeyr acknowledged, as he had frequently done, the weaknesses of democracy, but he told his hearers,

'The great advances of humanity have not come from discipline - they have come from the operation of the free human spirit.'

He declared that freedom to criticise was the first essential element in democratic freedom, and he condemned the tendency to rule

through an inner Cabinet, without consulting those who should be consulted.

☐ Of whom was he speaking? Of whom was he thinking when he said:

☐ 'There are those who, in the absolute assurance of their own rectitude, resent the fact that anyone should hold an opinion different from their own. When that does happen, they ascribe it not to intellectual conviction, but to some form of moral turpitude.

☐ 'So they become impatient of the free expression of opinion - they want to put restraints on opposition and criticism - they desire to see created in support of their views and policies, that servile, standardised, mass-mentality which is one of the instruments of dictatorship.

☐ ('..It is doubtless that tendency which expresses itself in attacks on the freedom of the press even in democratic lands.)

☐ The second great freedom, declared Hofmeyr, was the freedom to develop, and he declared that the upholders of trusteeship, which white South Africa had declared to be its national policy towards its non-white peoples, must not fear the day when the wards grew up; otherwise their trusteeship was unchristian.

☐ He reserved his final words for the students themselves:

☐ 'To you... I am speaking today for the first time as your Chancellor. I have spoken to you of freedom and the modern world's menace to it. It needs, as never before, defenders, stern and resolute, but withal lavish of the best that is in them. I want to enrol you for that fight. There is no fairer cause to fight for than the cause of freedom. Six hundred years ago the Nobles and Commons of Scotland at Arbroath made that historic declaration:

double inside single ☐ "We fight not for glory, nor for wealth, nor for honour, but for that freedom which no good man will surrender but with his life!"

double inside single ☐ "That freedom which no good man will surrender but with his life." That is the good fight I ask you to fight. And may you quit you like

men, men at once conscript and consecrated of your own free will, in the warfare that lies ahead.'



□ Hofmeyr received tumultuous applause, especially from the young. But others were grateful too, those anxious about the future, anxious about Hitler, anxious about the way that white South Africa exercised her trusteeship, under a Government that allowed its private members to bring forward private Bills that seemed designed, not for the exercise of trusteeship but for the strengthening of privilege. To listen to Hofmeyr gave them courage. His speech came at a time when believers in freedom, who were on the whole inclined to like the gay, chivalrous Deneys Reitz, were shocked when he said at Bethal that he favoured Press control. ~~THE FORUM~~ called it a 'first-class blunder',* and that of course was what it was. Reitz must, in a moment of aberration, have gone off the rails. His blunder was all the more worrying because Hertzog, thought now by many to resent any kind of political criticism, was planning, not for the first time in his career, a Bill to control the Press.†

Before Hofmeyr left for Cape Town, many of his old students of twenty years before gave him a dinner at the Carlton Hotel. Hofmeyr was now 45 years of age, and many of his old students were more or less that age. Fortified by wine and the passing of years, they openly called him Hottie, and subjected him to a barrage of affectionate ragging. It was the kind of atmosphere in which Hofmeyr, without the aid of alcohol, could more than hold his own. The bolder spirits brought out the skeletons from his cupboard, but it was like playing chess with a master, for he knew all their names and their years and their skeletons also.

Students laughed and cheered, and Hofmeyr smiled and giggled, especially when the thrusts went home. Some remembered a night at the old Empire, where a travelling revue company added local jokes for a largely university audience. 'Who do you think you are, anyway?' asked one comedian of another, 'The Principal Boy?' 'No,' replied the other with immense dignity, 'I'm the Boy Principal.'** Then the joking was over, and the ex-Principal-become-Chancellor turned from the gay to the serious, and for the space of twenty minutes held these gay registers in the hollow of his hand.

The day after Hofmeyr spoke in Johannesburg, Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia, six months after he had assured Chamberlain that once the Czechs cleared out of Sudetenland, he would have no further territorial claims to make in Europe. If Hofmeyr had ever had doubts about South Africa's duty in time of war, he had them no longer. Nazism he had always hated, but now he was prepared,

*~~THE FORUM~~ February 25, 1939.

**I am indebted for this story to an unidentifiable cutting.

to resist it by force. In his Oxford days he had been a kind of pacifist, being revolted by the idea that each side claimed to be doing God's justice. But D.C. Lusk, the Presbyterian chaplain in Oxford, had written from France that this revulsion was not a satisfactory ground for pacifism, because it was an objection to one war in particular and not to war in general. Lusk had argued that pacifists placed peace before purity, which is not the order of wisdom that cometh from above. Twenty-five years later, Hofmeyr had come to the same conclusion.

The Czechoslovakian crisis cast a heavy shadow over Parliament. It was not only the disaster that faced Europe, but that which might face South Africa, which was in all minds. And of course the crisis which faced the United Party. The anxiety of United Party members was in no degree lessened when on April 18, they lost the Parliamentary seat of Paarl to the Purified Nationalists. The Malanites were jubilant; to them Czechoslovakia was a far-away country, and would certainly cause no crisis in their own party. But if it led to war, it would rend the United Party from top to bottom.

It was Hofmeyr in the Budget Debate who shattered the false silence. Press-men said that he held the House spellbound. After declaring that South Africa had rightly supported Mr. Chamberlain, he said:

- 'Today the policy of appeasement lies a shattered wreck. It was launched on the tide of credulity, it has foundered on the rocks of a base betrayal of solemn assurances.
- 'Peace by appeasement today is a policy of futility - a policy of negation. I believe that the peace of the world can still be secured, but it can be secured only if the democratic nations band themselves together to resist, by whatever means may be necessary, the onslaught of authoritarianism.'

It had so far been the Government's policy to declare that if there were war, South Africa would not automatically be involved in it; Parliament would decide. But now Hofmeyr was saying that the issue was clear and that the Government ought to decide now. He was highlighting the age-old dilemma of the peaceful, who in the interests of peace will not prepare, even though the warlike are taking up their arms.

When Hofmeyr had finished speaking, he was greeted by a burst of cheers, from the Stallardites and the Smuts wing of the United Party. Of the Hertzog wing some were troubled; they understood the danger of Hitler, but they understood also the danger of

going to war at the side of Britain, for the second time in only twenty-five years. And there was now a new danger, for Britain and France had guaranteed the integrity of Poland. As for the rest of the Hertzogites, and the Malanites, their view was simple; Poland had nothing to do with them.

Hofmeyr wrote interestingly to Underhill about the position of Hertzog himself: *

Wal. □ (If war had come last September he would undoubtedly have insisted on South Africa remaining neutral, at least for a time. But since then his eyes have been opened, as apparently have those of your Prime Minister, to the aggressive nature of Hitler's designs. Today he would certainly not want to remain neutral in any event - his attitude would depend on the nature of the circumstances which brought the war about - but he has made it quite clear during this last week that if South West Africa is involved, he will be in the war, boots and all.)

□ Hofmeyr was writing about Hertzog as though the Prime Minister were facing a practical problem in a rational way. Hofmeyr, on this occasion at least, was not aware of the deep passions that moved the Prime Minister, especially that deep passion for independence, which meant more to him than all the problems of Europe and the Commonwealth.

While in university circles Hofmeyr was calling for a defence of democracy, and in political circles was saying that all democratic nations must stand together, he was saying in religious circles that man himself must be renewed, or his society would fall to pieces. The example of Hitler, who was inspiring millions of Germans with fanatical love of their fatherland, and filling them with a sense of purpose, made many believers in democracy feel ashamed, not of democracy, but of themselves. Things that democrats talked about, but which never got done, began to weigh upon democratic consciences - the miserable wages of Africans, the tensions between Afrikaans- and English-speaking people, the terrible slums of Johannesburg. And other things began to weigh too, especially on the consciences of Christians, too much comfort, too little public spirit, too much weariness of well-doing and a general drifting away from God. Many Christians, for whom the Cross of Christ

*~~Hofmeyr to Underhill~~, April 23, 1939.

and the Resurrection had once been the central realities of life, felt guilt because they had retreated into the field of ethics.

the Hofmeyr could easily have been one of these, but if he had been, he would not have confessed it, and least of all publicly. No one knew better than he the terrible ordeal that the world was facing. He had resisted the erosion of liberties and the spread of racialist doctrines for three brave years. To some extent his writing for THE FORUM, and his acceptance by many as their champion, compensated for his lack of success. Yet there must have been times when he wished for a greater inner strength and zeal, such as he had had in younger and simpler days, when his religion had been more dogmatic and evangelistic. There can be little doubt too that he shared, with many Christians and lovers of democracy, the fear that unless they were renewed, Hitler would scatter them like chaff if war came.

The Oxford Group was at that time calling insistently for spiritual renewal, and had invented the striking slogan, Moral Rearmament. In May of 1939 twenty-two prominent citizens signed an open letter, in which they declared that they were resolved to seek spiritual renewal for themselves, and urging others to seek it also. Among those who signed were General Smuts, Hofmeyr, Egeland, and F.S. Malan; Edgar Brookes and Ronald Currey; B.B. Keet from the Seminary at Stellenbosch, and Bernard Price the scientist. THE FORUM congratulated those who had signed for their frankness and courage.

It is quite certain that Hofmeyr and more than one of his fellow-signatories were not consenting to moral rearmament in the Oxford Group sense. That Hofmeyr had experienced renewal in any deep spiritual sense at this time, after the manner of a second conversion, is highly improbable. If he did, then he did not speak about it, and one of the marks of moral rearmament was that one did and should speak about it. However, he spoke a great deal about other things, the danger of war, and the challenge of Hitler to all that constituted Christian civilisation, and the moves being made outside Parliament, notably by some professors at Stellenbosch, to bring all Afrikaners together, and to achieve that hereniging of true souls that had eluded Afrikanerdom in 1933, when Hertzog, misguidedly they said, had embarked on that disastrous vereniging with Smuts and his imperialist followers. There was emotional support for such an appeal, for Afrikaner soul was calling to Afrikaner soul after the Voortrekker celebrations. Hofmeyr wrote that the Nationalist Party was a present danger.

□ (The danger is not so much in the future. As a matter of electoral responsibilities the chances of the Nationalist Party as such ever

having a majority of seats in Parliament are infinitesimal....



- 'The real danger is in the present - it is in the cries the Nationalist Party is raising, the doctrines it is preaching, the spirit it is engendering. Those are the things that should be contested by all who have at heart the peace, the stability, and the ultimate welfare of South Africa.*

no quotes

In the middle of 1939 the new Ossabrandwag, the Oxwagon Watch, caused further anxiety. ~~It had been founded in the Free State by the Rev. Christian Kotze, to perpetuate the Voortrekker spirit. It was a semi-secret organisation, and was organised on the Nazi model.~~ It found alarming support from Afrikaners who hated Smuts, despised Hertzog, and watched Malan critically. It spread to the Transvaal, and then became, in the words of Eric Walker, the most influential Afrikaner popular movement since the Great Trek itself.**

Hofmeyr was in a serious mood when he and his mother returned to Pretoria at the end of the session, and were again guests of honour at the annual dinner of the Chemical Metallurgical and Mining Society in Johannesburg. But he did not rob them of his opening joke. Shutting his eyes, and in apparently serious vein, he reminded his hearers that he had been there as Principal, then as ex-Principal; as Administrator and then as ex-Administrator; as Cabinet Minister and then as ex-Cabinet Minister. His joke was received with loud laughter, and he then went on to speak to the guests of the difficult days that were facing the world. He quoted to them the words on a tablet in an old Yorkshire Church,

'In the year 1652 when throughout England all things sacred were either profaned or neglected, this church was built by Sir Robert Shirley, Bart., whose special praise it is to have ^{done} the best things in the worst times and to have hoped them in the most calamitous.'

- Times were indeed calamitous. No one had any hope any more that war could be averted. France and Britain, in spite of their guarantees, had accepted Hitler's seizure of Bohemia and Moravia, so who could expect that Hitler would take seriously their guarantee to Poland? British and French attempts to make a pact with Russia came to nothing, and who could blame Russia for her lack of enthusiasm?

- Times were not good in South Africa either. If Hitler invaded Poland, ^{and}

*THE FORUM, June 17, 1939. **~~Walters~~ HISTORY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, 267 &

112

ACAP
PARLIM
CENTRE
1992

it were Britain and France who first declared war, then Hertzog would be firm in his neutrality. If Smuts opposed him, the United Party would be torn in two, and the great experiment of Fusion would come to an end. But worse than that, white South Africa would be torn in two also, and all the old hatred between Boer and Briton would be reborn, and all the work of Botha, Smuts, and Hertzog be undone.

22

- On August ~~22~~ of 1939, Stalin loosed his bombshell on the world. He had signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler. Chamberlain wrote immediately to Hitler warning him that Britain would stand by her pledge to Poland.
- In South Africa, owing to an extraordinary oversight, Parliament had to be re-summoned to extend for a short while the life of the Senate, which would otherwise have ended on September 5. On September 1, while members were travelling from all parts of the Union to Cape Town, Hitler marched into Poland. On Saturday, September 2, the Prime Minister, on a demand of Dr. Malan, promised the House to make a statement on the situation on Monday, September 4.
- No sooner had the House adjourned than Pirow went to the Prime Minister and told him that Smuts would depart from the neutrality agreement of 1938, and what was more serious, that Louis Esselen had already organised a majority for war. Hertzog immediately called a Cabinet Meeting for the Saturday afternoon at Grooten-Schuur. He said to Pirow, Amice, it will now become clear whether our unity is sham or real. Pirow wrote, I pressed his hand and left his office. 1.
- Just as the Cabinet meeting was about to begin, Hertzog received from Dr. Malan a letter pledging the support of the Nationalist Party for any neutrality motion. 2. Hertzog announced to the Cabinet his decision for neutrality, and said, 'I take it we stand by the policy of neutrality so clearly laid down a year ago.' Smuts announced that, although he had supported the agreement of 1938, he was now convinced that Hitler threatened the peace and liberty of the world; therefore he would oppose any neutrality motion. The Cabinet then adjourned to await the fateful news that Sunday would bring when the Franco-British ultimatum expired; according to Pirow, its members hoped for a miracle. English-speaking South Africa waited for the morrow, tense and anxious, for the decision that would take their young men to war, and begin the grim struggle to prevent Hitler from conquering the world. No English-speaking South Africans were more tense and anxious than the Jews, whose future on the earth depended on the outcome of such a struggle. But Afrikaners were tense too, knowing that for the second time in twenty-five years Afrikaners would be asked to fight for the country that had conquered their two republics; some were willing, some were unequivocally opposed, some dreaded the broader twis. Hardly concerned at all were the great majority of the population, the Indians, the Coloured people, the Africans,
1. ~~Pirow~~ James Harry Munnik Hertzog, p.245. This is Pirow's account. Many held the opinion that Pirow had assured Hertzog of a majority. 2. Van der Heever, General J.B.M. Hertzog, p.699. Blackwell found it reprehensible that Hertzog did not reveal this to Smuts. He suggests that Hertzog revealed himself as an intriguer, but few students would support him. As will be seen, Smuts's own actions could be questioned.

History

405

who watched with astonishment the tribal ferocity of the white rulers of the world, who in a few years could kill more people than all the wars of Africa had ever done.

- On Sunday at noon Britain declared war on Germany. That afternoon the Cabinet met again at Groote-Schuur. According to Pirow, Hertzog began by reading a cable from Chamberlain saying,

'You can adopt one of three alternatives: you can declare war on Germany, you can break off diplomatic relations with her or you can remain neutral. I beg of you not to follow the third course.'

But Hertzog was adamant on following the third course. It was clear that the Cabinet was irrevocably split, seven for Smuts and six for Hertzog. Pirow wrote

'My recollection of the rest of that meeting is hazy. Everybody excepting the two leaders was a bit emotional.'

- Pirow added grave words:

'That Sunday afternoon's Cabinet meeting not only killed Fusion; it also made it a certainty that when the political pendulum swung back again, as it was bound to do, Malan's extremists would take over and the English-speaking South Africans would become bywoners in their own country.'¹

- Was Hertzog so unemotional? Van den Heever, in a compassionate passage, wrote that after the meeting there was in Hertzog almost a feeling of despair.

- 'He had hoped, with the zeal of a missionary, that the English-speaking people would now give a conclusive answer to the charge that they had a divided heart and put England's interests above those of their own country. He had now expected that gesture, as an answer ... to Afrikaner doubters. It would have given racialism the death-blow.... Had it been worth it, his hard struggle to convert the people? If General Smuts had only helped him! But it was all in vain, and with a feeling of many things in ruin about him, the grey-headed statesman stood at the end of a long road, full of sombre thoughts.'²

- The House was silent when Hertzog stood up to speak on the morning of 4 September 4. Europe had its drama, but there was drama enough here, at one of the decisive moments in South African history. Hertzog moved that

1. A bywoner is a white labourer who lives on the farm of a wealthier compatriot. He is essentially poor and often backward. He does work for the farmer and in return has the use of a house and some land where he grows good and has a few cattle. Van Brugger's Appie is the classic story of a bywoner family. 2. ~~Van den Heever, General J. B. M. Hertzog, pp. 700.~~ 2.

Folk's and subsequent material see General J. B. M. Hertzog

21

(Circular stamp: ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED)

NP South Africa remain neutral, except for Simonstown. His throat was troubling him and members leaned forward and cupped their hands behind their ears in order to hear. Otherwise, says van der Heever, he was alert and buoyant. He announced immediately that there was an unbridgeable division in the Cabinet, which in his opinion was beyond repair. His own views on neutrality were known; he had often made them known to the people. Not looking at Smuts at his side, Hertzog said,

"If there were those who differed from me, then I would have thought it was their duty, while there was time, while the people could still have been informed, to have spoken and to have stated their view."

He did not deserve to be left in the lurch at such a critical time, he said. If South Africa took part in this war, will any occasion ever arise when she would not need to join England in war? Why had England declared war on Germany? Because she had certain obligations towards Poland. But South Africa had no such obligations. Why had England not declared war on Russia, who had also marched into Poland?

70mm He said declared that the issue was greater than one of declaring war or protecting property or persons; it was an issue of a national independence that ought to be maintained and exercised in comprehensible ways. No one would reproach England for declaring war without consultation; South Africa was in the same position, it could act without consultation, and it was its duty to do so.

There were observers, Blackwell and Reitz amongst them, who thought that Hertzog might have won the day if he had confined himself to pleading for neutrality stemming from independence, or if he had pleaded for the continuance of Fusion, which in his eyes meant more for the peace of South Africa than any righteous anger about Poland. But he did not. He embarked on a defence of Hitler and his invasions, (irritated by an interjection, Blackwell says) and blamed it all on the Treaty of Versailles. He said he could understand the humiliation and the feeling of the German people.

"I know, for I have been through the same mill ... I know what it is to be driven by humiliation to a point where one says, let happen what will, let everything be subject to the removal of that humiliation which is inflicted on my people day after day. I will not endure it. I shall rather die than let it continue."

R If South Africa took part in the war, he declared, that would be the end of her membership of the Commonwealth of Nations.

Smuts rose to follow Hertzog, and declared that whatever could have been

~~1. Van der Heever, *South Africa in the War*, p. 201. 2. Van der Heever, *General History of South Africa*, p. 702. Note that neither Pirow nor van der Heever suggest that.~~

said for Hitler, could be said no more after his rape of Czechoslovakia. It was not a problem of Poland. Hitler would next demand South West Africa. He was out for one thing and one thing only, the domination of the world. He moved that South Africa sever relations with Germany.

About nine o'clock that evening the debate came to an end. All were aware of the grave cleavage in the House, those supporting Hertzog being overwhelmingly Afrikaans-speaking, and those supporting Smuts about two-thirds English-speaking. When the count was taken, Smuts had triumphed by 80 votes to 67.

Hertzog then went to Sir Patrick Duncan and asked that Parliament should be dissolved and the issue be put at a General Election. Duncan had considered well the dangers of both agreeing and refusing. He refused, and Hertzog then resigned the Prime Ministership. Duncan then called on Smuts to form a new Ministry.

??

Anti-war Afrikanerdom was dumbfounded. The man who had led them for fifteen years was gone, and in his place was the Imperialist Smuts, who on September 5 severed relations with Germany. Smuts formed a new Cabinet. Heavy tasks lay ahead. Smuts himself would be here, there, and everywhere, Britain, France, America, North Africa and the Middle East. And who would look after things at home, and look after them well, and work without ceasing? Smuts sent for Hofmeyr.

STET

And Hofmeyr, as it were, came running.

* Had Hertzog resigned as soon as he lost the majority in the Cabinet, and had he reformed the Cabinet without the dissident Ministers, Duncan would probably have had to agree to the dissolution. No one would have dared to predict that Smuts would have won the election. ROUND TABLE of December 1939 declared it probable that Hertzog would have been returned to power, but in what circumstances of violence and civil war, it did not say.

stet