

JEWS AND ZIONISM:
THE SOUTH AFRICAN
EXPERIENCE
(1910–1967)

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rights failed to gain unequivocal acceptance, a split was precipitated. This really marked the end of Hertzog's long career, for although in January 1941 a group of his followers, headed by N. C. Havenga, formed the Afrikaner Party to persevere with his principles, Hertzog died within the year.⁷⁷

Opposition to the war rendered the Afrikaner national movement more receptive to Nazi German influence than ever, for it began to seem as if the shortest path to a restored Afrikaner republic lay in the prospect of an understanding with a victorious Germany. Whereas the Greyshirt proponents of National-Socialism had never become more than a marginal group on the fringes of the Afrikaner national movement, with the coming of the war Nazi influences penetrated deeply into the mainstream of Afrikaner nationalism. The most powerful expression of this process was the movement known as the *Ossewa Brandwag* [Oxwagon Sentinel]. Emerging out of popular celebration of the centenary of the Great Trek at the end of 1938, its original purpose was to act as a cultural organization which would perpetuate the nationalist fervour to which these celebrations had given rise. However, it soon assumed a paramilitary and authoritarian character, and under its second Kommandant-General, Dr. (Hans) J. F. J. van Rensburg, previously Administrator of the Orange Free State, it became a significant political force. As an avowed admirer of the German National-Socialist system, deeply impressed by a personal meeting with Hitler while on a visit to Germany, Van Rensburg infused an increasingly Nazi-like content into the organization. This was evident in the symbols of the *Ossewa Brandwag*, in the oath and pledge of obedience taken by members and, above all, in the formation of a Storm Troop section known as the *Stormjaers*.

The political ideology which evolved within the *Ossewa Brandwag* was an Afrikaner nationalist adaptation of German National-Socialism, differing mainly in its deliberate ideological vagueness and in its emphatically Calvinist-Christian pretensions. It spoke of a '*Christelik-Nasionale Lewensbeskouing*' [a Christian National world outlook] and a 'Christian National Republic', but its conception of the 'nation' bore the unmistakable marks of German National-Socialism, as was evident in such terminology as *bloedsuiverheid* [blood purity], *die bonde van die bloed* [the bonds of blood], and *bloed en bodem* [blood and soil].⁷⁸ The political constitution which it envisaged for

the 'Christian National Republic' was first revealed to the public in July 1941 with the publication of its Draft Constitution.⁷⁹ It provided for a state president whose authority was well-nigh dictatorial; gave Afrikaans the status of 'first official language' and permitted English equal status only where and when 'judged by the State authority to be in the best interests of the State and its inhabitants.' Citizenship, besides being the preserve solely of Whites, was only accorded to 'subjects of whom it can be expected that they will act as up-builders of the nation'. Although not specifically stated, Jews were obviously liable for disqualification by this condition.

To be sure, this 'Draft Constitution' did not belong exclusively to the *Ossewa Brandwag*; it was, it seems, the product of joint experimental thinking on the part of the major Afrikaner organizations, including Malan's *Herenigde* National Party. But whereas the *Herenigde* National Party never committed itself officially to the Draft Constitution, the *Ossewa Brandwag* certainly did. Moreover, unlike the Party, the *Ossewa Brandwag* was openly contemptuous of party-politics and rejected the parliamentary system as an inadequate means for the creation of the republic. Unwilling to limit itself merely to the role of an extra-parliamentary action front for the *Herenigde* National Party, the *Ossewa Brandwag* increasingly took the form of a distinctly anti-parliamentary movement which did not shrink from the use of violence to attain its objectives. It engaged in sabotage activities, such as the cutting of telegraph wires and bombings, in an effort to demonstrate popular opposition to the war and hinder the South African war effort. Amongst those of its members who were consequently interned by the Government during the war was B. J. Vorster, later to become Prime Minister of South Africa.⁸⁰

There can be no doubt that the *Ossewa Brandwag* had enormous appeal for the broad masses of Afrikaners. By early 1941 it claimed a membership of well over 300 000.⁸¹ Its pageantry and dramatization of the *Voortrekker* cultural tradition and its aggressive nationalism tapped huge reservoirs of national frustration amongst Afrikaners. More than political parties, it seemed to offer to the ordinary Afrikaner the chance to contribute to the great task of mobilizing the Afrikaner nation for victory. However, from the Jewish point of view the *Ossewa Brandwag* was the quintessence of all that was antagonistic to Jews in the Afrikaner national movement. While on the basis of its official programme it cannot be said that it was as rabidly

or single-mindedly anti-Semitic as the Greyshirts had been, it was transparently clear that in the kind of authoritarian republic to which the *Ossewa Brandwag* aspired, the Jews would fall under the heading of 'blote onderdane' [mere subjects], rather than full citizens; and that when the *Ossewa Brandwag* spoke of the 'elimination of nationally-harmful [*volksdadelike*] and liberal attitudes' it was referring above all to the Jews.⁸² Moreover, the entire gamut of *Ossewa Brandwag* anti-democratic terminology was permeated with anti-Semitism. Thus it was 'British-Jewish-Masonic' imperialism or capitalism, or 'British-Jewish' democracy or the 'Jewish money power' which they denigrated with tireless repetition. Their journal, *Die Ossewa Brandwag*, was replete with anti-Semitic slogans often quite as rabid as anything the Greyshirts had purveyed: 'The Jewish race is not a European race', 'it knows no such thing as patriotism'; 'every land is the Jew's temporary home as long as it is to the advantage of his hunt for profits', and so on.⁸³

Whereas the *Ossewa Brandwag* was essentially extra-party in character, in 1940 another group of anti-democratic Afrikaner nationalists came into existence inside the framework of the *Herenigde* National Party itself. Its founder was Oswald Pirow. Called the *Nuwe Orde* [New Order] it began as an ideological study circle devoted to the elucidation of the principles outlined in a pamphlet titled *Nuwe Orde vir Suid-Afrika* [New Order for South Africa] which Pirow had written.⁸⁴ From the Jewish point of view Pirow was something of a paradox, for in the 1920s he had been considered not unfriendly to the Jews and he was always closely associated with the relatively moderate Hertzog rather than with the extremist Malan. Although he had not hidden his admiration for Germany's Nazi leaders, he evinced no noteworthy anti-Semitic proclivities until the outbreak of the war, when he suddenly revealed himself as a self-avowed anti-Semite and proponent of National-Socialism.

Pirow's New Order became the most intellectual and sophisticated of all the pro-National-Socialist movements in South Africa. Functioning from its base as an elite study circle within the *Herenigde* Party, the New Order hoped that its version of National-Socialism for South Africa would permeate not only the party but also other Afrikaner political and cultural organizations, thereby placing all expressions of Afrikaner nationalism on a sound National-Socialist basis. Pirow's line of thought may be summarized as follows: what-

ever the results of the war might be, it was already clear that liberal democracy had ended its undistinguished career. The present imperialist-controlled, capitalist-dominated, parliamentary democracy was finished. A superior 'new order' of society and government had already emerged in Europe and the Afrikaner nation had to follow the example of countries like Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal which had adopted National-Socialist principles for themselves, each in tune with its own unique national character. In the South African case the nature of the 'new order' had to be determined in consonance with certain fundamentals of Afrikaner national character. Thus, it could not permit any equality or integration between White and Black; it had to be Christian in character and 'this meant that anti-Christian and also decidedly un-Christian elements must have no say in the State'; it had to be republican in form and all bonds with the British Empire had to be severed; ultimate control had to be the prerogative of the Afrikaner nation 'to the exclusion of all that is anti-national, unnational or unassimilable'.⁸⁵

Priding himself on original thinking within the National-Socialist world outlook, Pirow purported to reject crude anti-Semitic diatribes. The only explicit mention of Jews in the New Order's official platform was in regard to its immigration policy which stated succinctly that it would 'forbid the entry of Jews and other undesirable persons'. Although he had no compunction about declaring, 'I am openly and outspokenly anti-Semitic', he disdained propaganda based on 'arguments of blood and race interlarded with whispering about ritual murders and shock references to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion'. In his view, this was an 'inefficient form of anti-Semitic propaganda which continually plays directly into the hands of the Jewish Board of Deputies'. Pirow's anti-Semitism thus did not go as far as the total racist dehumanization of the Jew which characterized German Nazism. He said his New Order would make a distinction between three categories of Jews: first, a small group which had assimilated with the Afrikaners and would therefore be entitled to full citizenship rights; second, Jews who had come to South Africa prior to the First World War – they would be disenfranchised but could remain if they behaved well; third, Jews who entered after 4 August 1914 – they would be regarded as illegal immigrants and would have no right of residence.⁸⁶

In the first two years of the war, under the compound impact of

Germany's overrunning of Europe and pressure of the *Ossewa Brandwag* from without, and the *Nuwe Orde* from within, the *Herenigde* National Party not only entertained notions of attaining a republic in the wake of Britain's anticipated defeat, but also experimented extensively with National-Socialist ideas.⁸⁷ This experimentation ranged from ideas akin to Pirow's⁸⁸ to a trend of thought resting on a distinctly Calvinistic-religious foundation and to attempts to make Kruger's old republican constitution the model of a new republican order [*Krugerisme*]. The most authoritative statement reflecting these non-democratic gropings was a publication entitled *Die Republikeinse Orde – Party Se Toekomsbeleid Soos Deur Dr. Malan Uiteengesit* [The Republican Order, Policy for the Future as set out by Dr. Malan] published in 1941. This statement, made at a time when Nazi Germany's star was high, was predicated on the assumption 'that a victorious Germany . . . would want to see the British connexion broken' and also that it would want to 'conclude peace with a friendly government'. With a bow in the direction of Pirow's group it also gave an assurance that the idea of a 'new order' had 'already either openly or by implication been included in our party's programme of principles and of action'. Moreover, it went so far as to say that 'whatever may be said in favour of the British parliamentary system . . . it has always been a failure in South Africa when viewed from the *volk's* point of view.' Yet it was not prepared to go the whole way towards National-Socialism. Instead it looked for inspiration backwards to Kruger's Republic and came up with the affirmation that 'the Boer nation, which is the creator and protector of our own South African nationality, brought about a system in the Boer Republics which is our own and differs from the British parliamentary system.'

What this ideological position meant in constitutional terms was spelled out in a Draft Republican Constitution whose publication Dr. Malan authorized in January 1942, and whose contents we have already summarized in connection with the *Ossewa Brandwag*. It appeared in the wake of his espousal, in Parliament, of a Christian-National Republic which would be independent of the British Empire or any other foreign power; modelled on Kruger's Republic but adapted to modern conditions; devoid of 'all that is harmful in the present British liberal democracy'; and protected against 'capitalists and parasitic exploitation . . . and against hostile and un-na-

ditional elements'.⁸⁹ This Draft Constitution, published as 'an indication of the general direction taken by the *Herenigde Party*', represented the limit of the *Herenigde National Party*'s experimentation with National-Socialist ideas. It was also the point of greatest convergence with the anti-parliamentary *Ossewa Brandwag*, especially insofar as it provided for a highly authoritarian executive 'State President' and scarcely any party political system. Yet it cannot be regarded as more than a temporary thrust in this direction since neither then nor at any later time was it formally accepted by any congress of the *Herenigde National Party*. On the contrary, after its appearance in early 1942, it all but vanished from the political scene.

In the final analysis, the *Herenigde National Party* remained committed to the existing parliamentary system, thereby drawing a significant line of differentiation between itself, on the one side, and Pirow's New Order as well as the *Ossewa Brandwag*, on the other side. By the middle of 1941 the *Ossewa Brandwag* had become so powerful that it posed a serious threat to the hegemony of the party over nationalist *Afrikanerdom*. Likewise, Pirow endangered the elected leadership and his scorn for parliamentarianism threatened to jeopardize the ordinary electoral work of the party. Both were incomparably more dangerous than Weichardt and his fringe group of Grey-shirt anti-Semites had been in the 1930s; they signified malevolent 'groepvorming' [group forming] within the party and schism within *Afrikanerdom*. The upshot was a bitter struggle for hegemony in the second half of 1941. Malan and Strydom determined to wage a relentless war against both groups, branding them in and out of Parliament as servants of 'foreign ideologies' and advocates of 'dictatorship'.⁹⁰ By the beginning of 1942 the ascendancy of the party was assured. Although Pirow's followers continued an independent existence outside of the party and the bulk of the *Ossewa Brandwag* remained intact, both were in decline thenceforward. Dr. Malan had decisively out-manoeuvred them. As a result of the lines of division in this 'civil war' within the Afrikaner national movement, the *Herenigde National Party* under Dr. Malan's leadership emerged, by the time of the 1943 general elections, as defenders of the system of parliamentary democracy and of its legitimate place in any future republic. The confrontation with more sharply defined National-Socialist views had catapulted it away from its own experimentation

with these ideas, a process afterwards confirmed by the growing anticipation of Germany's defeat in the war.

Yet, it is notable that throughout this ideological conflict, anti-Semitism, so far from being a point of contention, had remained a source of common agreement between the adversaries. The fact that the *Herenigde* National Party supported the parliamentary system and rejected 'foreign ideologies' did not deter it from contrasting its alternative, '*Krugerisme*', with 'British-Jewish Parliamentarism' and 'British-Jewish Capitalism', any less than Pirow denigrated Kruger's *Zuid-Afrikaner Republiek* as a 'Sammy Marks Republic'. In December 1940 the party's congress in the Transvaal confirmed its 1937 decision specifically to disqualify Jews from membership and resolved that the Federal Council should endeavour to persuade the party in the other provinces to follow suit.⁹¹ In his speech Dr. Malan warned the 'Jewish Sunday newspapers' that they had 'gone too far in launching attacks against the Afrikaner', and the Jews that they had best not forget 'they were guests in South Africa'. Although the party's Federal Council did not follow the Transvalers in officially banning Jews as members, the party's policy towards Jews was crystallized in its 'Programme of Principles, Programme of Action and Constitution' adopted in 1941. Under the heading of 'Immigration and the Jewish Question' the following policy was adopted:

- a) The repatriation of all illegal and undesirable immigrants.
- b) The party favours in general the immigration of suitable assimilable White European population elements.
- c) In view of South Africa's specific problems, the party recommends the immediate cessation of all further immigration of Jews and further of all elements which cannot be assimilated by the South African nation or which are a hindrance or dangerous to society.
- d) It further has in view:
 - i) exercise of stronger control over naturalization
 - ii) introduction of a vocational permit system for un-naturalized foreigners as exists in many other countries.
- e) The Party wishes to take all possible steps to fit South Africa's own original White population elements for earning a living in every sphere and to protect them against unfair competition.⁹²

An examination of the speeches and statements of the *Herenigde* National Party leaders at this time reveals an abundance of anti-Semitic themes hardly less offensive than those displayed by the *Ossewa Brandwag* and Pirow. Indeed, precisely because the party was engaged in so bitter a struggle for supremacy within the Afrikaner nationalist camp, it had to prove that it was second to none in its determination to put the Jews in their place. Even the fact that during the war Jewish immigration had virtually ceased – barely 220 Jews being admitted into the Union for permanent residence – did not put an end to the anti-Jewish immigration theme in the war years. Articles of alarm continually appeared in the Afrikaans press to the effect that ‘the country was being swamped with Jews’.⁹³ Still in the forefront of the National Party’s attacks on Jews was the irrepressible Eric Louw. He never tired of calling for licence restriction against Jews in commerce and industry and warning that ‘if nothing was done about the Jews, they would push the Afrikaner completely out of both trades and professions’. In like vein *Die Burger* claimed it had made an investigation of the records of commercial licences in the Cape and found that 65 to 75 per cent were held by ‘persons with alien names, or non-Europeans’.⁹⁴ Another recurrent anti-Semitic theme which was greatly intensified in the 1940s, was the ‘Jewish-Communist’ bogey. This was stimulated by the heightened emphasis which the National Party’s propaganda was now placing on the ‘Black peril’, as well as by the objective fact that Jews were prominent in the Communist Party and trade union movement. ‘Jewish Bolshevism’ was linked with what was, in Afrikaner nationalist eyes, the abhorrent notion of Black-White equality. Hence, a volatile association was being made between Jews, Communists and the ‘Black peril’.

Against the background of this relentless flow of anti-Semitic statements, it is hardly surprising that as far as Jews were concerned, the *Herenigde* National Party was regarded as no better than the *Ossewa Brandwag* or Pirow. Thus the *Zionist Record*’s political reviewer commented: ‘Despite the party’s rediscovery of democracy . . . stale crumbs of Nazi propaganda still cling to it. It still envisages the domination of an Afrikaner *Herrenvolk*. It still seeks sanctions against population elements it calls ‘*onnasionaal*’ [un-national]. It is still anti-Semitic, as witness any speech by Mr. Eric Louw and his friends.’⁹⁵ Professor A. Hoernlé, a gentile liberal of note, summed up the posi-

tion incisively. Referring to the great dispute between the Malanites and the *Ossewa Brandwag* on whether Kruger's Republic had been democratic or not, he commented:

. . . both alike are appealing to anti-British and anti-Jewish sentiment among Afrikaners; the former by representing *all* democracy as British-Jewish, the latter, by distinguishing Afrikaner democracy from British-Jewish democracy.⁹⁶

Indeed, in the same breath as the *Herenigde* National Party's leader in the Transvaal, Strydom, condemned van Rensburg and Pirow for 'advocating dictatorship', he accused them of 'dividing the Afrikaner *volk* so that Smuts and the Jews can rule'.⁹⁷