

Marshalling a Splintered Society: Censorship, Publicity and Propaganda in South Africa During the Second World War

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Abstract

This article examines several important aspects of state propaganda in South Africa during the Second World War, the country's participation in which was riddled by controversy. The wartime government of General J.C. Smuts lacked broad-based support and contested opposition which was shaped by Nazi influences. Latent South African socio-political friction surfaced, and anti-war violence ensued. In response, the Smuts administration adopted a multi-media publicity and propaganda campaign aimed at mobilising support for its war policy. The article focuses on subversive Nazi efforts within South Africa before and during the war, and on the impact of these on internal political divisions. These are significant because they formed the context for propaganda strategies formulated by the South African authorities. The article also analyses the ways in which the Smuts government deployed propaganda through its direction and censorship of radio, film and the print media, including the creation of a Bureau of Information. It argues that in the long run, state propaganda had limited effect and was ultimately a futile exercise as persistent realities, notably, racial prejudice, socio-economic privation and diverse political loyalties undermined the endeavour to achieve national cohesion and unity.

Keywords: Second World War; Smuts; Nazism; censorship; propaganda; radio; print media; film; Bureau of Information.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel stel ondersoek in na belangrike aspekte van staatspropaganda in Suid-Afrika tydens die Tweede Wêreldoorlog. Die land se deelname aan dié oorlog is met stryd en omstredenheid belaa. Generaal J.C. Smuts se regering kon nie op 'n breë steunbasis reken nie, en het te kampe gehad met 'n opposisie wat deur Nazisme beïnvloed is. Suid-Afrika se sluimerende sosio-politiese spanning is na bowe gebring, wat anti-oorlogsgeweld tot gevolg gehad het. Daarop het die Smuts-regering 'n

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multi-media publisiteits- en propagandaveldtog van stapel gestuur wat daarop gemik was om steun vir sy oorlogsbeleid te mobiliseer. Hierdie artikel fokus op ondermynende Nazi-aktiwiteite binne Suid-Afrika voor- en tydens die oorlog, en die uitwerking daarvan op die land se interne politieke verdeeldheid. Dit is van belang, omdat dít die konteks vir die Suid-Afrikaanse regering se propagande-strategie gevorm het. Die artikel ontleed ook die wyse waarop die Smuts-regering propagande ontplooi het, deur voorskrifte en sensorskap wat radio, film en die pers betref; sowel as die stigting van 'n Buro van Inligting. Dit voer aan dat staatspropagande, op die lange duur, 'n beperkte uitwerking gehad het, en dat dit eintlik 'n vermorsing was, omdat voortslepende vraagstukke, veral wat betref rassevooroordele, sosio-ekonomiese gebrek en uiteenlopende politieke lojaliteit, die strewe na nasionale eenheid en samehang ondermyn het.

Sleutelwoorde: Tweede Wêreldoorlog; Smuts; Nazisme; sensorskap; propaganda, radio; die pers; film; Buro van Inligting.

Introduction

In his influential 1927 publication *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, the American social scientist, Harold D. Lasswell argued that in wartime, 'much reliance must be placed on propaganda ... no government could hope to win without a united nation behind it, and no government could have a united nation behind it unless it controlled the minds of its people'.¹ Indeed, since the First World War (1914–1918), 'people's minds' have been recognised as a critical area of warcraft.²

During the Second World War (1939–1945), all belligerent nations employed propaganda in an attempt to induce national consensus and unity behind their war policy.³ As an extensive body of scholarship now shows, for example, with the rise of authoritarian states in Europe (Germany, Italy and Soviet Union) and east-Asia (Japan) during the inter-war years, inter-state propaganda was deployed extensively

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1. H.D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (New York: Peter Smith, 1927, reprinted in 1938), 9-10.
 2. In this article, 'propaganda' is understood as a systematic effort to manipulate perceptions and thoughts, to shape attitude and direct the conduct of a targeted group to elicit a response intended by the propagandist. See G.S. Jowett and V. O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London: Thousand Oaks, 2006), 7; D. Welch, *World War II Propaganda: Analyzing the Art of Persuasion during Wartime* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2017), xii-xiii; T.H. Qualter, *Propaganda and Psychological Warfare* (New York: Random House, 1962), 54; J. Wilke, ed. *Propaganda in the 20th Century: Contributions to its History* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 1998), 2.
 3. Welch, *World War II Propaganda*, xiv.

to obstruct and destabilise enemy nations.⁴ Notably, Nazi Germany conducted propaganda to promote Nazi doctrine and to immobilise enemy states.⁵ Imperial Japan also utilised propaganda to advance its political causes in south-east Asia and, in particular, to foster anti-war attitudes within the United States of America (USA) because of their rival interests in the Pacific region.⁶ France and Germany waged subversive propaganda against each other, through Radio Strasbourg and Radio Stuttgart respectively, with the intention of instigating popular internal resistance.⁷ Britain and the USA, often self-proclaimed as champions of liberal democracy, found themselves at the sharp end of extensive propaganda waged by Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) throughout the 1930s. When the war broke out, they instituted official information agencies as rapidly as possible to combat the subversive Axis propaganda and to preserve morale on the home-front.⁸ Propaganda was also employed by all parties for subversive objectives.⁹ Furthermore, European imperial powers employed propaganda in their African and Asian colonies to generate support for the war effort.¹⁰

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4. See Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 201-203; D. Lerner, 'Afterword', in *Propaganda and Communication in World History*, vol. I, eds H.D. Lasswell, D. Lerner and H. Speier (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979), 283-284; A. Rhodes, *Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion in World War II* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1976), 107-108.
 5. Qualter, *Propaganda*, 112-115.
 6. G. Daniels, 'Japanese Domestic Radio and Cinema Propaganda, 1937-1945: An Overview', in *Film and Radio Propaganda in World War II* ed. K.R.M. Short (London: Routledge, 1983); S. Masaharu, "'Negro Propaganda Operations": Japan's Short-wave Radio Broadcast for World War II Black Americans', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 19, 1 (1999), 5-26.
 7. M. Williams, 'War is in the Air: Networks of Enemy Radio Broadcasting in France and Germany during the Phoney War (1939-1940)', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 39, 3 (2019), 602-617.
 8. J. Spiller, 'This is War! Network Radio and World War II Propaganda in America', *Journal of Radio Studies*, 11, 1 (2004), 55-72; Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 241-245.
 9. 'Propaganda' is used generally to promote or rally support for a particular cause, event, policy or action, for example to promote unity and encourage service or sacrifice. However, 'subversive propaganda' (also referred to as 'political warfare') is employed with malicious intent for negative purposes, to undermine a society, a cause, policy or other effort through fabrication and distortion. Jowett and O'Donnell distinguish between 'white propaganda' which is attributed to a credible source and often closer to the truth, and 'black propaganda' which is about falsehood, concealment, lies and deception. See Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 16-18; R.K. Graham, *British Subversive Propaganda during the Second World War: Germany, National Socialism and the Political Warfare Executive* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).
 10. See W.P. Holbrook, 'British Propaganda and the Mobilization of the Gold Coast War Effort, 1939-1945', *The Journal of African History*, 26, 4 (1985), 347-361; F. Gadsden, 'Wartime Propaganda in Kenya: The Kenya Information Office, 1939-1945', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 19, 3 (1986), 401-420; R. Smyth, 'War Propaganda during the Second World War in Northern Rhodesia', *African Affairs*, 83, 332 (1984), 345-358.

Thus, during the twentieth century, propaganda was employed widely by different states to advance their political interests.¹¹ South Africa was no exception. However, its situation was particularly complex. The adoption of a war policy – the commitment to support Britain against Nazi Germany in the war – exacerbated division and dissent among the population.

When the Union of South Africa declared war against Nazi Germany, the country was thrown into political turmoil.¹² ‘South Africa’s first enemy’, proclaimed a government loyalist, ‘was not the Luftwaffe or the grey-coated divisions [the German Wehrmacht] ... but “the enemy within the gates”’.¹³ Unlike its fellow British Commonwealth dominions of New Zealand, Canada and Australia, which downplayed their internal disputes to support Britain, South Africa encountered intense local political division. As military historian Ian van der Waag tells us: ‘belligerence was contested in 1939 ... [and] a national rebellion loomed’.¹⁴

The commitment to participate in the war triggered widespread disaffection in sections of the white Afrikaans-speaking society (hereafter the Afrikaners).¹⁵ This led to incidents of subversion, sabotage, violent outbursts and even some collaboration with the enemy – in the person of Nazi agents.¹⁶ On the other hand, the country’s black majority, which had long been subject to racial discrimination and socio-economic exclusion under successive white minority governments, displayed a certain apathy and for the most part continued to focus its efforts on campaigning

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11. Wilke, *Propaganda in the 20th Century*, 1; Jowett and O’Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 201.
 12. Union of South Africa, Proclamation No. 197 of 1939, *Union Government Gazette Extraordinary*, 117, 1344, 6 September 1939.
 13. J.S.M. Simpson, *South Africa Fights* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1941), 53.
 14. I. van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2015), 176.
 15. A. Grundlingh, ‘The King’s Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa’s Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939-1945’, *The Journal of African History*, 40, 3 (1999), 351-365; K. Shear, ‘Colonel Coetzee’s War: Loyalty, Subversion and the South African Police, 1939-1945’, *South African Historical Journal*, 65, 2 (2013), 222-248; A. Stewart, ‘The British Government and the South African Neutrality Crisis, 1938-39’, *English Historical Review*, 123, 503 (2008), 947-972.
 16. For details, see E. Kleynhans, *Hitler’s Spies. Secret Agents and Intelligence War in South Africa* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2021); P.J. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1991); C. Marx, ‘Dear Listeners in South Africa’: German Propaganda Broadcasts to South Africa, 1940-1941’, *South African Historical Journal*, 27 (1992), 148-172; K. Fedorowich, ‘German Espionage and British Counter-intelligence in South Africa and Mozambique, 1940-1944’, *The Historical Journal*, 41, 1 (2005), 209-230.

for political rights and equality.¹⁷ Faced with a lack of wider national support, the Smuts government adopted a volunteer military policy and embarked on a massive publicity and propaganda drive to mobilise a fractured society and aid recruitment for the war effort. Censorship was also introduced to control the flow of information, to shape the political narrative and sustain national morale.

Historiographical literature on the Second World War propaganda is extensive, particularly as it concerns Europe, the USA and the Commonwealth countries. Wartime propaganda studies related to Africa are also growing.¹⁸ However, publications about South Africa's Second World War propaganda are limited. Historians have paid the closest attention to the political and social dynamics of white society and soldiers.¹⁹ Many scholars who provide insight on South African wartime propaganda reflect on the subject in a general sense or focus on a limited number of propaganda platforms such as radio and film.²⁰ This article provides a critical and more comprehensive account of propaganda in South Africa during the Second World War. Firstly, it identifies the major Nazi influences and their subversive efforts in South Africa before and during the war. Secondly, it analyses the dynamics of the country's internal political division and the impact of Nazi influence in exacerbating these. Such analysis is crucial because political differences formed the focus of propaganda

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17. B. Nasson, *South Africa at War: 1939-1945* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), 60-64; L. W.F. Grundlingh, 'The Military, Race and Resistance: The Conundrums of Recruiting Black South African Men during the Second World War', in *Africa and World War II*, eds J.A. Byfield, C.A. Brown, T. Parsons and A.A. Sikainga (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 71-88.
 18. For example, see B. Ibhawoh, 'Second World War Propaganda, Imperial Idealism and anti-Colonial Nationalism in British West Africa', *Nordic Journal of British West Africa*, 16, 2 (2007), 221-243; R. Ginio, 'Marshal Pertain Spoke to School Children: Vichy Propaganda in French West Africa, 1940-1943', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 33, 2 (2000), 291-312; R. Smyth, 'Britain's African Colonies and British Propaganda during the Second World War', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 14, 1 (1985), 65-82. See also recent works on WW II by D. Killingray, *Fighting for Britain: African Soldiers in the Second World War* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010); and Byfield, Brown, Parsons and Sikainga, eds, *Africa and World War II*.
 19. See for instance, A.M. Grundlingh, 'Afrikaner Nationalism and White Politics', in *South Africa in the 20th Century*, eds B.J. Liebenberg and S.B. Spies (Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik, 1993); A. Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London: Continuum, 2006); N. Roos, *Ordinary Springboks: White Servicemen and Social Justice in South Africa, 1939-1961* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005); C. Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2009); Nasson, *South Africa*; and Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*.
 20. See S. Chetty, 'Imagining National Unity: South African Propaganda Efforts during the Second World War', *Kronos*, 38, 1 (2012), 106-130; S. Chetty, 'All the News that's Fit to Print: The Print Media of the Second World War and its Portrayal of the Gendered and Racial Identities of the War's Participants', *South African Historical Journal*, 54, 1 (2005), 30-53; N. Wiederroth, "'Radio Broadcasting for Blacks during the Second World War': It Could be Dangerous ...", *Historia*, 57, 2 (2012), 104-149; Marx, 'Dear Listeners', 148-172; D. Pretorius, "'Sluit nou aan!' South African Union Defence Force Recruitment Posters from the Second World War", *South African Historical Journal*, 71 (2019), 41-69.

strategies formulated by the South African authorities. The article then discusses the way the Smuts government employed propaganda in an effort to stem Nazi influence and to mobilise a fractured society in support of the war effort. The conclusion it reaches is that state propaganda had limited success, that it failed to achieve national cohesion, and that Nazi sympathies remained influential among certain sectors of South African society. Furthermore, it posits that this failure had profound significance for the coming to power of the apartheid government in 1948.

Nazi influences and internal politics

Before the outbreak of the war in 1939, the Union of South Africa was subjected to extensive Nazi propaganda through the Zeesen Radio broadcast service, conducted in the Afrikaans language (discussed below).²¹ During the 1930s, subversive activities were perpetuated by secret Nazi agents who had penetrated the country for this express reason.²² They targeted Afrikaners and purported to advocate for the ‘promotion of Afrikaner nationalism’.²³ They also fostered racial attitudes among Afrikaners by promoting pro-German sentiments, anti-Semitism, anti-black and anti-British feelings.²⁴ According to a government loyalist, J.S.M. Simpson, before the war Nazi Germany had already waged a ‘war of attrition’ in South Africa by means of ‘propaganda, bribery, blackmail, intimidation, flattery and insinuation’, with all such actions designed to wean South Africa away from ‘her British Commonwealth allegiance’.²⁵

Furthermore, during the inter-war years, South Africa saw rising ultra-nationalist Afrikaner movements with open pro-Nazi tendencies, notably organisations such as the Ossewabrandwag (OB) (Ox-wagon Sentinels), the Greyshirts and the New Order.²⁶ The OB was established in 1938, with the intended objective of promoting an ‘Afrikaner culture’ by engaging in a symbolic Great Trek to commemorate the centenary of the departure of parties of Voortrekkers into the

21. Marx, ‘Dear Listeners’, 148-172.

22. University of Cape Town, Jagger Library, Archives and Manuscripts (hereafter UCT), H.G. Lawrence Collection, BC640, E3.262, Otto von Strahl Report, ‘Protect Your Home Country’, 18 July 1941; O. von Strahl, *Seven Years as a Nazi Consul* (Cape Town: Redout, 1942), 96. See also Kleynhans, *Hitler’s Spies*.

23. South African Department of Defence Archives (hereafter DODA), Union War Histories (hereafter UWH), 281, B.I. 31, Axis Broadcast by Traitors, Intelligence Summary, 31 October 1939; and Marx, ‘Dear Listeners’, 150-156.

24. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC640, E.5, Official White Book on Nazi and Nazi propaganda in South Africa from 1933 to the outbreak of the war in September 1939, I-V, 1945; Fedorowich, ‘German Espionage’, 209-230. For a broader overview see Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*.

25. Simpson, *South Africa Fights*, 1-3.

26. University of KwaZulu-Natal (hereafter UKZN), Killie Campbell Archives and Manuscripts (hereafter KCM), Durban, E.G. Malherbe Collection, 444/7, KCM 56975 (87-100), Secret Military Intelligence Reports on the Ossewabrandwag, c1940-1945; Fedorowich, ‘German Espionage’, 209-230; and Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*, 119-160.

interior in 1834. In the years 1939 to 1940, under Colonel J.C.C. Laas and then under Dr J.F.J. van Rensburg (1941), the OB became increasingly militant with the intention of pursuing its cause of instituting, by force, an Afrikaner-dominated authoritarian republic.²⁷ At the outbreak of the Second World War, the OB became the most potent force spearheading militant action against the Smuts government. There was also another secretive and, interestingly, in the words of General J.B.M. Hertzog, a movement with ‘dangerous policies’ called the Afrikaner Broederbond (AB).²⁸ Insidiously, this secret organisation permeated several structures of state machinery, including those of justice, police, labour, the agricultural sector and certain other anti-government organisations.²⁹ The AB’s main aim was to promote white Afrikaner political, economic and cultural supremacy in South Africa.³⁰ There was an emergent threat of subversion and the rise of Nazi-inspired racist politics in the country. Smuts recognised the problem. As the deputy prime minister under General J.B.M. Hertzog, he lamented the unchecked growth of Nazism and the spread of ‘propaganda, falsehood, delusion and fomenting of strife’ in the country.³¹ However, Hertzog, who harboured pro-German sympathies, merely observed the situation, and failed to take action. As a result, when the war erupted, systems were not in place to deal with anti-war activism and subversive propaganda.

In September 1939, when the Union parliament voted to support Britain’s war effort, divisions within the country were triggered.³² Some sections of Afrikaner

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27. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC640, E5. 83-84, ‘Ossewabrandwag: Origins, Development and National Political Aims’, Report by Dr Jack S. Harris, a ‘special assistant’ in the United States Office of War Information in South Africa, on the interview with J.F.J. van Rensburg, commandant general of the Ossewabrandwag, 5 June 1944; UKZN, Malherbe Collection, 444/7, KCM 56975 (87-100), Secret Military Intelligence Reports on the Ossewabrandwag, c1940-5; *Die Ossewa-Brandwag: Vanwaar en Waarheen?* 29 June 1942, 3-15.
 28. UCT, Lawrence Collection, B640, E3. 263, ‘The Afrikaner Bond’, reproduction of a speech delivered in 1935 by the then South African prime minister, General J.B.M. Hertzog, at Smithfield, titled: ‘Aims of the Afrikaner Bond, Secret Society backed by Nationalists, Dangerous Policies, Folly of Domination by one Race in the Union’, 11 November 1941. See also UKZN, Malherbe Collection, 444/7, KCM 56975 (194), ‘The Afrikaner Broederbond’, by Capt. Janie A. Malherbe, March 1944. For the history of the Afrikaner Broederbond, see A.N. Pelzer, *Die Afrikaner-Broederbond: Eerste 50 Jaar* (Kapaastad: Tafelberg, 1979).
 29. UKZN, Malherbe Collection, 445/3, KCM 56975 (70), ‘The Afrikaner Bond, Ossewa Brandwag and related Organisations: Structure and Interrelationships’. Diagrams and Charts, 1943-1944. See also E.G. Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment* (Cape Town: Timmins, 1981), 241.
 30. UCT, Lawrence Collection, B640, E3.263, Report, ‘The Afrikaner Bond’, 11 November 1941; Pelzer, *Die Afrikaner-Broederbond*, 63-64; Grundlingh, ‘Afrikaner Nationalism and White Politics’, 269.
 31. National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria (hereafter NASAP), Field Marshall J.C. Smuts Papers, A1, 246, Private Letters, Jan Smuts to M.C. and A.B. Gillet, 3 August 1939.
 32. M. Roberts and A.E.G. Trollip, *The South African Opposition, 1939-1945: An Essay in Contemporary History* (London: Longmans, 1947), 4.

society harboured deep resentment of the very idea of offering support to Britain. They regarded the British as their erstwhile nemesis and therefore could not stomach Smuts's decision to support them.³³ Many flocked to join the ultra-nationalist Afrikaner movements such as the OB and became engaged in extensive anti-war protest action. Other extremist Afrikaner movements such as the OB-affiliated Stormjaers (Stormtroopers) embarked on violent anti-war activities.³⁴ In protest against the war policy, Hertzog, a proponent of non-involvement in European affairs, resigned as the Union's prime minister. The pro-war Smuts then became the new prime minister at the request of the Union's governor-general, Sir Patrick Duncan.

Hertzog joined Dr D.F. Malan's National Party (NP) as the official opposition. Together, Hertzog and Malan did their utmost to contest Smuts's war policy.³⁵ They embarked on anti-war and anti-British campaigns on public platforms, in peace meetings and in the press.³⁶ Participation in the war became 'a violently practical political issue' which split the country.³⁷ Among the majority – the disenfranchised black South Africans - the outbreak of the war also produced tensions. Questions arose regarding expressions of support for a government which perpetuated discriminatory policies against them. Dissatisfied with the racially-induced repressive policies and practices perpetuated by the state, many black South Africans displayed apathy towards the war and continued to focus on pushing for political and socio-economic rights.³⁸

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33. For details on the historical Afrikaner struggles against the British, see Van der Waag, *A Military History*; Liebenberg and Spies, eds, *South Africa in the 20th Century*; H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003); J. Barber, *South Africa in the Twentieth Century. A Political History - In Search of a Nation State* (London: Blackwell, 1999); and T.R.H. Davenport and C. Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (London: Macmillan, 2000).
 34. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC640, E3.262, Otto von Strahl Report, 'Protect Your Home Country', 18 July 1941; and Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*, 119-160.
 35. H.J. Martin and N.D. Orpen, *South African Forces World War II, VII. Military and Industrial Organisation and Operations in Connection with the Conduct of the War, 1939-1945* (Cape Town: Purnell, 1979), 24; Fedorowich, 'German Espionage', 209-230. See also Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*, 119-160; and Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 213-215.
 36. The major anti-government Afrikaans press included *Die Vaderland*, *Die Burger*, *Die Transvaler* and *Die Volksblad*. See DODA, UWH, 276, B.I. 28, Memorandum for the Prime Minister regarding Statements of Opposition Speakers on the War Issue, 1943.
 37. DODA, UWH, 265, B.I. 20, Internal Security, Intelligence Summaries, 21 September 1940; DODA, Chief of General Staff War (hereafter CGS War), 47, 12/4, Potchefstroom Disturbances: Report of the Commission of Enquiry, 9 October 1940.
 38. William Cullen Library, Historical Papers Research Archive (HPRA), University of the Witwatersrand, A.B Xuma Papers, AD 843, ABX 401217, Minutes of the Annual Conference of the African National Congress, Bloemfontein, 15-17 December 1940. See also T. Karis and G.M. Carter, eds, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964, vol. 2: Hope and Challenge, 1935-1952* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973), 339-340; and Grundlingh, 'The Military, Race and Resistance', 71-88.

Smuts endured attacks from several quarters during the war. There were anti-war protests which manifested in the form of riots, assaults on soldiers and incidents of bomb explosions across the country.³⁹ There was also ‘fifth column’ activity. This was a broad subversive movement which sought to undermine state authority. It comprised those who held diverse interests. Most were Afrikaners, some of whom supported Hitler; there were also those who believed that the Union was politically too close, too subservient, to Britain. They were prepared to do anything, including assistance to the enemy, just to damage British influence in the country. There were also those who rejected, even hated Britain outright; those who were pro-Nazi; and others who were German nationals residing in South Africa.⁴⁰ Further, non-parliamentary movements such as the Greyshirts and the New Order joined Malan’s NP representing what Albert Grundlingh describes as an ‘anti-war Afrikaner opinion’.⁴¹ These movements shared anti-Smuts and anti-government sentiments as well as harbouring antagonism towards the British people at large.

In an effort adopted primarily to avoid inflaming the ultra-right Afrikaners it was decided to recruit black South Africans for military service, but the recruits were restricted to serving as unarmed auxiliaries. They carried assegais (short spears) instead of firearms like their fellow white soldiers. This was a blatant manifestation of inequality on the basis of race. Black South Africans felt that they were not ‘real soldiers’, and were embittered that they were not entitled to similar treatment as white soldiers.⁴² Unsurprisingly, this created animosity and drew sharp criticism from black nationalist leaders who condemned the move as a disgraceful perpetuation of racial discrimination. As a result, many black men resisted war service and constantly demanded the introduction of liberal reforms.⁴³

39. DODA, CGS War, 47, 12/4, Potchefstroom Disturbances: Report of the Commission of Enquiry, 9 October 1940; DODA, CGS War, 47, 12/4, Johannesburg Disturbances: Report of the Commission of Enquiry, 19 March 1941.

40. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC 640, E3. 183, Memorandum on Internal Security, 30 May 1940; DODA, UWH, 88, MS 22, ‘Summary of the Manpower of the Union’, Chief of the General Staff to Chairman of Defence Advisory Committee and Chairman of Defence Authorities Committee, 2 October 1940. At the outbreak of the war, the *Cape Argus* estimated that between 5 000 to 6 000 German nationals were resident in South Africa. See ‘Union’s Internment Policy’, *Cape Argus*, 24 April 1940.

41. Grundlingh, ‘The King’s Afrikaners?’, 353.

42. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 150, Report on Transvaal Non-European People’s Conference, Yusuf Dadoo to General J.C. Smuts, 2 July 1942; ‘Natives Ask to be Armed’, *Cape Times*, 6 March 1942; ‘No Colour Bar Request: Demand for Arming Non-Europeans’, *Cape Argus*, 19 March 1942.

43. ‘Report of a Deputation from the ANC to the Deputy Prime Minister by A.B. Xuma, 4 March 1942’, Document 26, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 188-198.

Nazi subversion and propaganda

Besides anti-war activism waged by ultra-nationalist Afrikaners, South Africa also encountered Nazi-inspired subversive activities conducted by secret agents operating through German consular offices located in Portuguese East Africa (modern Mozambique), a colony of Portugal which was neutral during the war.⁴⁴ These agents sought out and collaborated with pro-Nazi Afrikaner movements.⁴⁵ They also collected political, economic and military intelligence in South Africa and transmitted it to Berlin via a secret radio device which was installed on the farm of the OB leader, Hans van Rensburg, at Vryburg in Western Transvaal. That device was used for transmitting information and propaganda material calculated to instigate destabilisation in South Africa and ‘immobilise South African troops in the Union’.⁴⁶

To curtail anti-government subversion, the Smuts government introduced internment measures in 1939, incarcerating thousands of enemy aliens, mostly German immigrants, as well as Union nationals suspected of being ‘subversives’.⁴⁷ This effectively constrained Nazi penetration and espionage networks. By 1943, reporting on Nazi Germany’s destabilisation effort, the British Intelligence Service, which coordinated operations with South Africa during the war, noted that ‘the chief weapon[s] available to BERLIN [are] broadcast news and propaganda’.⁴⁸ According to Baron Otto von Strahl, former German consul in South Africa (1936–1938) who defected to the Allies and provided information on Nazi activities during the war, Nazi Germany had drawn lessons from the First World War and considered propaganda a potent weapon for weakening the internal social cohesion and political unity of a

44 South African authorities uncovered secret Nazi agents such as Henri Jacques (Hans) Rooseboom who operated a Nazi spy network between 1939 and 1942, and also Lothar Sittig, code-named *Felix*, who coordinated a spy ring between 1942 and 1945. For details on the activities of Nazi spies in South Africa, see Kleynhans, *Hitler’s Spies* and Fedorowich, ‘German Espionage’. See also UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC640, E5.78, Statement about Activities of Henri Jacques (Hans) Rooseboom during the period 9 October 1939 to 28 June 1942; and BC640, E3.266, ‘List of Dangerous Nazis’, 4 March 1942.

45. UKZN, Malherbe Collection, 444/7, and KCM 56975 (87-100), Secret Military Intelligence Reports on the Ossewabrandwag, c1940-5.

46. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC640, E5.47, Strictly Confidential Report on the Affidavit of Luitpoldt Werz by George Cloete Visser, South African Police Special Investigator, Union War Prosecutions, 25 November 1946. See also Kleynhans, *Hitler’s Spies*, 47-129; and Shear, ‘Colonel Coetzee’s War’, 222-248.

47. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC640, E3.2, Notes on Matters Discussed with Smuts, 10:20 to 11:00 am, 18 September 1939; and BC640, E5.49-50, Summary of Internments and Releases during the year ending 22 December 1945, 12 January 1946; DODA, UWH, 299, B.I. 44, Internment Policy, Zeesen Broadcast, 13 January 1940.

48. Kleynhans, *Hitler’s Spies*, 133.

targeted country.⁴⁹ Nazi Germany, thus, would rely on Zeesen radio, which operated from Konigswusterhausen, southeast of Berlin, to conduct international propaganda in 47 different languages.⁵⁰

The German radio broadcasts were also beamed across African countries to incite colonised people against the British.⁵¹ In South Africa, Zeesen broadcasts emphasised the political and military humiliation Afrikaners suffered at the hands of the British.⁵² It denigrated Smuts and his government at every turn. He was referred to as a 'liar', 'traitor' and a 'British puppet' for adopting the war policy.⁵³ The government was also criticised for adopting the interment policy, which was equated with the British concentration camps, employed as counter-insurgency measures against the Afrikaners during the South African (Anglo-Boer) War of 1899 to 1902. One broadcast said:

In 1899, 75, 000 Boers fought against 450, 000 British soldiers ... the Boers fought stubbornly until the British directed their efforts in the most brutal manner against women and children in order to bring the fighting men to their knees.⁵⁴

The Zeesen broadcasts captivated many Afrikaner listeners. This was evident in the pro-German statements such as '*Hitler gaan wen*' (Hitler is going to win), '*Hitler sal dinge reg maak*' (Hitler will make things right), and '*Hitler sal ons 10/- per dag en meer grond en al die bier wat ons wil hê, gee*' (Hitler will give us 10/- per day, more land and all the beer that we want).⁵⁵

Another broadcast declared: 'Jan Smuts [is] the traitor of our nation, the liar, the hypocrite, the British-Jewish Imperialist', and expressed its indignation at the government's association with Britain in the war.⁵⁶ Those without radio sets congregated at various central locations for the nightly dose of anti-Smuts and anti-

49. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC640, E5.44.262, 'Protect your Home Country', 18 July 1941. See also Qualter, *Propaganda*, 112-113.

50. DODA, Archives of Zeesen Broadcast (ZB), WR 65/9/41-WR 65/9/43, Extracts: Broadcasts from Enemy Radio Station, 1941-1945; 'Salient Reduced', *The Star*, 27 April 1945; and Marx, 'Dear Listeners in South Africa', 148-172.

51. Holbrook, 'British Propaganda', 349-350.

52. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC 640, E3.183, Memorandum on Internal Security, 30 May 1940; Marx, 'Dear Listeners', 156-164; and Van der Waag, *A Military History*, 178-179.

53. DODA, UWH, 239, B.I. 1, Extracts of Zeesen Broadcast, 9-10 October 1939; and Marx, 'Dear Listeners', 156-164.

54. DODA, Press and Propaganda Archives (hereafter PP), 1, A1, Zeesen Broadcast, 11 October 1940.

55. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC 640, E3. 183, Memorandum on Internal Security, 30 May 1940.

56. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC 640, E3.24, Intercepted and Translated letter, Le Roux to Holm, 25 November 1939.

government diatribes.⁵⁷ Smuts was perturbed. As he put it: ‘Night by night this country is being attacked and bombarded with propaganda from Germany, in a way far more dangerous, subtle and insidious than any attack by armies.’⁵⁸

Manifestly, and aimed particularly at Afrikaners, Nazi propaganda encouraged division within South Africa, and promoted opposition to and hostility against Smuts. Mindful of the impact of this Nazi influence on Afrikaner opinion, Smuts trod cautiously with regard to war mobilisation. He attempted the balancing act of coordinating the war effort abroad and maintaining stability on the home-front. To this end, publicity and propaganda were deployed by the South African Bureau of Information and the Department of Defence to counter Nazi propaganda and to generate support for the government’s war policy. The government also wanted to encourage volunteers to fill the ranks of the Union Defence Force (UDF) as well as to sustain national morale. As I explore in detail elsewhere, propaganda strategies were also formulated to target black South Africans through the Native Affairs Department (NAD). The main aim was to induce loyalty and cooperation in the government’s war effort, and to prevent potential unrest.⁵⁹

Publicity and propaganda policy

South African state authorities were concerned about the significance of political division caused by the government’s war policy. According to Lieutenant Colonel J.J. Kruger, the director of the Government Printing and Stationery Services, it was necessary to disseminate a ‘multitude of ideas to the mass of the people, in an effort to secure maximum positive results in the various spheres of war activity’.⁶⁰ Effective measures were needed to counter Nazi propaganda which had spread since the 1930s. It was equally important to build a strong support base for securing manpower for war service. However, from the start, there was no effective policy or practical system to carry out a government propaganda programme.⁶¹ As early as September 1939, Smuts liaised with Harry G. Lawrence (his Interior Minister in charge of internal security and propaganda) to formulate strategies for countering Nazi influence. Zeesen Radio was considered the main reason for internal division and spreading the

57. DODA, UWH, 265, B.I.20, Intelligence Summaries, 25 November 1939; DODA, ZB,1, WR 65/9/41, Extracts of Zeesen Broadcast, 11 November 1941.

58. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, vol. 303/1, General J.C. Smuts Speaks, Bloemfontein, 3 November 1939.

59. For details, see F.L. Monama, ‘Creating the Correct Frame of Mind: State Propaganda towards Black South Africans during the Second World War, 1939-1945’, *South African Historical Journal*, 73, 3 (2021), 601-632.

60. NASAP, Archives of the Department of Trade and Industry, (hereafter HEN), 2191, 432/1/13, vol 2, Memorandum on Government Publicity and Propaganda, 27 November 1943.

61. Ibid.

virulent anti-war opposition.⁶² The outcome of the discussion was the appointment of a ‘first-class journalist’, Arthur Wilson, from the Argus Publishing Company, as a chief information officer in October 1939, and the establishment of the Bureau of Information (BOI) as the primary agency for providing the public with information and guidance.⁶³

Authorities also turned to the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) for assistance with counter-propaganda against Zeesen.⁶⁴ They regarded this as a necessary step to expose Zeesen’s distortions, to provide the ‘correct’ information, and to generate confidence in the government. It was envisaged that this would assist in stemming the tide of Nazi influence. Without any ‘set policy or driving purpose’, however, Wilson worked ‘haphazardly’ to set up the publicity and propaganda programme for the government. The purpose of the BOI was to form a link between the government, the military and the public. It was required to conduct propaganda through the medium of the press, radio and films in order to popularise the government’s war policy.⁶⁵ Due to government concerns about the impact of Nazi propaganda, the BOI intended to focus mainly on Afrikaners: ‘To try and convert the Afrikaans-speaking section of the population from their present pro-Nazi attitude of the mind, to a belief in the justice of the Allied cause.’⁶⁶

The BOI identified four categories of Afrikaners in South Africa: those who were convinced supporters of Smuts; those who were waverers and open to ‘persuasion’ (amongst this group were the supporters of J.B.M. Hertzog); those who supported D.F. Malan (the National Party leader) - this group was susceptible to sentimental appeal and argument, to whom ‘propaganda must be rigorously directed’; and in the fourth category, those who were so ‘rabid that they would always be

62. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC640, E3.2, Notes on Matters discussed with Smuts, 10:20 to 11:00 am, 18 September 1939; NASAP, Archives of the Social Welfare Department (hereafter VWN), 940, 278/1, vol. I. 2, Appointment of Information Officer, 3 October 1939; Hansard, Union of South Africa, Debates of the House of Assembly, vol. 40, August-September 1940, col. 1247.

63. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC640, E3.2, Notes on Matters discussed with Smuts, 18 September 1939; NASAP, Archives of the Social Welfare Department (hereafter VWN), 940, 278/1, vol. I. 2, Appointment of Information Officer, 3 October 1939; Union of South Africa, Debates of the House of Assembly, vol. 40, August-September 1940, col. 1247.

64. UCT, Lawrence Collection, BC640, E3.4, Notes of the Second meeting of Cabinet Committee on Publicity, 5 October 1939; NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 132, Memorandum for Cabinet Sub-Committee on Publicity, 8 November 1939.

65. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 132, Memorandum for Cabinet Sub-Committee on Publicity, 8 November 1939; also Smuts Papers, A1, 144, Memorandum on the Bureau of Information: Present Activities, 23 August 1940; ‘The South African Bureau of Information, Interview with the Director, Arthur Wilson’, *The Nongqai*, June 1942.

66. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 132, Memorandum for Cabinet Sub-Committee on Publicity, 8 November 1939.

impervious to propaganda'.⁶⁷ To eliminate confusion, propaganda needed to be directed towards a specific purpose as well as appealing to 'an ordinary person'. The intent was to wage effective propaganda that would break down the pro-Nazi bias among Afrikaners and then create a platform for goodwill towards the government. The BOI also indicated that the presentation of propaganda material should be 'subjective' and appeal directly to Afrikaners' 'sentiments through sarcasm, irony and humour'.⁶⁸

In November 1939, the state introduced various forms of censorship. These applied to all postal and telegraphic communication passing between the Union and all countries other than members of the British Commonwealth.⁶⁹ To avoid criticism from opposition groups, Union authorities concluded a Voluntary Censorship Agreement with newspaper editors.⁷⁰ The state established censorship stations in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and Windhoek, with a subsidiary station in Pretoria. For effective control of all external telegraphic traffic, three major censorship points were established in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. Smuts appointed Brigadier H.J. Lenton, the director of Signals and Postmaster General as the controller of Censorship. He was based in Cape Town, the country's legislative capital and headquarters of the naval intelligence section.⁷¹ Censorship of communications provided valuable information, particularly for providing insight into the opinions of those in the armed forces and dissatisfaction in the population at large. This, it was argued, would enable the authorities to institute preventive measures expeditiously. Thus, censorship and government propaganda worked hand-in-hand to influence public opinion.

Until December 1940, government focus was aimed at refuting Zeesen inaccuracies, misstatements, and factual distortions, and to provide what it considered authentic information. Wilson was responsible for broadcasting messages which clarified or corrected inaccurate Zeesen statements. From 1941, however, government propaganda strategy changed. Authorities invited heads of government departments, military officers and prominent members of [white] society throughout the country, ranging from academics to professionals, to present talks about the 'essential issues of the war', entertain educational themes and also to make direct

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 144, Union of South Africa, Report on the Postal and Telegraphic Censorship, 4 September 1940.

70. DODA, CGS War, 197, 42/4, Minutes of a Meeting on the working of the existing Organisation for Press Information, Publicity and Propaganda, 17 October 1940; DODA, PP, 63, PU 6/9/4/, Report of Meeting of Newspaper Editors Consultative Committee in Pretoria, 23 October 1940.

71. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 144, Union of South Africa, Report on the Postal and Telegraphic Censorship, 4 September 1940; DODA, Army Intelligence, 50, I. 44, History of Censorship, 31 March 1943.

appeals to the public. Those who participated included Dr S.H. Skaife, Dr C.L. Leipoldt, Dr B. de Meillon, Dr M.S.B. Kritzing, Dr A. Coetzee, Advocate G. Saron and Rabbi Israel Abraham.⁷² In the case of public criticism, cabinet members also provided explanatory statements to alleviate anxieties or concerns.⁷³ Radio propaganda thus became the first initiative to combat Nazi propaganda and inspire public confidence in the ability of the government to execute its war policy effectively. This endeavour is examined in more detail in the next section.

Broadcasts and bulletins: Radio propaganda

On 18 September 1939, a three-year old SABC entered the uncharted terrain of waging a belated radio propaganda effort ‘to assist the [governing] authority in the prosecution of the war’.⁷⁴ It had taken two weeks to reach that decision. Zeesen had a significant head-start since it had begun broadcasting propaganda aimed at South Africa in the early 1930s.⁷⁵ The SABC’s original broadcast policy ‘to educate, inform and entertain, and also to satisfy the cultural and linguistic interests of the white English and Afrikaans speakers’ was expanded to include pro-war programming.⁷⁶ It sourced material (international events and news) from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), news from Reuters and local news from the South African Press Association (SAPA).⁷⁷ The SABC also constructed a ‘Diversity Receiving Station’ at Panorama in Johannesburg to conduct an ‘Interception Service’ against foreign broadcasts, and to transcribe and telegraph to relevant government departments for responses.⁷⁸ For instance, Zeesen transmissions were intercepted, examined and alternative perspectives were offered by the Union authorities, aiming to counter perceived distortions.

Standing firmly behind the Smuts government, the SABC liaised with the BOI to conduct pro-war propaganda. The BOI was allocated 15-30 minutes daily to broadcast government policy and provide updates on the war. SABC-BOI war-related

72. DODA, UHW, 273, B.I. 25, Broadcast by ‘Panel Speakers’, 21 June 1941. Experts addressed subjects including Economics, Geology, Psychology, Social Science, Commerce, Law, Zoology, History, Geography and Agricultural Science. See also South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), *Annual Reports, 1937-1949*, SABC Library, Johannesburg, specifically SABC Programmes: ‘Talks’, *Annual Reports of 1941-1945*.

73. DODA, PP, 63, PU 6/3, Bureau of Information, hand-written note, Director of Military Operations to Director of Military Intelligence, 23 December 1943.

74. SABC, *Annual Report, 1937-1939*, Board’s War Policy, 1939, 4. See also R. Teer-Tomaselli and K. Tomaselli, *Currents of Power: State Broadcasting in South Africa* (Bellville: Anthropos, 1989).

75. For details on SABC Wartime Broadcasting, see F.L. Monama, “‘Blind’ Warfare: Radio Propaganda Dynamics in South Africa during the Second World War”, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 42, 4 (2021), 773-794.

76. SABC, *Annual Report, 1940*, 5-9

77. SABC, *Annual Report, 1938*, 7-8.

78. *Ibid.*, 6.

programmes included English and Afrikaans material such as ‘The Shadow of the Swastika’; ‘War Commentary’; ‘The Voice of the Nazi’ (also translated to Afrikaans); ‘From the Home-Front’; ‘For You at Home’; and ‘Lines of Supply’. Afrikaans topics included ‘Uit eie Krag’; ‘Uit die Hart van die Volk’; ‘Vir die Soldate in die Hospitale’; and ‘Die Land van Ons Vaders’.⁷⁹ It also issued daily bulletins and broadcast statements from government and military officials. Prominent speakers such as the UDF’s chief of General Staff, Lieutenant General (Sir) Pierre van Ryneveld, gave talks on South Africa’s reasons for joining the war, as well as on aspects related to the economic and industrial capacity of the Allied powers (also South Africa) to sustain the war.⁸⁰ Rather than limiting its focus on rebuttals, the SABC-BOI propaganda efforts were mixed, with positive aspects of reports, such as emphasising the strength of the South African state.

Government officials such as Smuts and Wilson also issued statements appealing for unity and support against the Nazi threat. Wilson’s broadcasts highlighted the danger of Nazi authoritarianism against the values of liberty, self-determination and social equality supposedly championed by white South Africa, and appealed to the [white] public to unite behind the government’s war policy in support of the Commonwealth of Nations.⁸¹ Smuts also made a similar appeal, saying:

In this war, Britain fights a life and death struggle against the domination of the world by force, against the Nazi policy of demands on other nations accompanied by threats of force. This policy threatens the liberty and independence of all small nations, South Africa included.⁸²

Furthermore, he appealed for ‘unity of effort’ against the Nazi peril to ensure the ‘protection of independence, freedom and justice’. Nazi Germany was presented as a destructive force against smaller and weaker nations. Smuts pointed out that some of the smaller nations (Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg) were ‘like us [South Africa], fighting for their lives ... for the right to be free ... [rather than suffer[ing] against the forces of darkness and barbarity’. He called for unity and sacrifice to safeguard the liberties and heritage which were under attack.⁸³ Smuts’s message of unity was also echoed by a senior UDF officer, Brigadier General Dan Pienaar, officer commanding (OC) the 1st South African Brigade in North Africa. In his broadcast,

79. See SABC, *Annual Reports*, 1938-1946.

80. DODA, UHW, 273, B.I. 25, Broadcast by ‘Panel Speakers’, 21 June 1941. Experts addressed subjects such as Economics, Geology, Psychology, Social Science, Commerce, Law, Zoology, History, Geography and Agricultural Science.

81. DODA, UWH, 265, B.I. 20, Intelligence Summaries, 10 November 1939; DODA, CGS, Group 2, 169/7, Fortnightly Intelligence Report, 25 January 1941.

82. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 299, General Smuts Appeals to the Public for Funds for Propaganda, 28 September 1939.

83. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, vol. 303/1, Speeches and Broadcast by J.C. Smuts, No. 120, November 1939 - December 1941.

Pienaar appealed to the South African public to forget their petty political differences and to unite in defence of ‘the integrity and priceless liberty’ of the Union.⁸⁴ It should be noted, however, that such notions of independence, freedom, and justice were hypocritical. They were limited to the white population of the country.

Appeals for military recruitment were also conducted over the radio and in these, Smuts played a leading role, saying:

To all able-bodied sons of South Africa, the call has come to make their stand in the line of resistance to the forces of tyranny and oppression, to fight in defence of all those liberties which we hold dearer than life itself, to fight and conquer. And to that call, the youth and manhood of South Africa is responding nobly ... thousands are leaving security, ease and comfort, to face discomfort, hardship, wound and even death itself for the cause ...⁸⁵

UDF officers also implored young white South Africans to join the armed forces ‘to ensure security’ or die at the hands of Hitler’s fanatics:

Hitler has bred a generation of ruthless fanatical fighters – even the youngest of them trained to mow down with their Tommy guns every living thing – even women and children – even animals. Against such an enemy we’ve got to do our bit in some form or another or be snuffed out.⁸⁶

With the development of the war, appeals were extended to white women to enlist for service so as to augment the perennial manpower shortage. Using female voices such as those of Mrs Anderson (OC women’s auxiliary units) and Mrs J. Malherbe (wife of the Union’s director of Intelligence, Dr E.G. Malherbe), women were encouraged to serve in the military and industrial production, instead of working in sweets, biscuits, and soap factories. The general theme was to release men for the frontlines and take over their tasks in the industries.⁸⁷ Through radio broadcasts, the authorities drove a narrative of change, declaring that military service provided opportunities for middle and elite class white women to participate in roles seen previously as socially undesirable.⁸⁸ Other SABC programmes included interviews

84. ‘Brig. Pienaar’s Call for Service’, *Cape Times*, 8 January 1942.

85. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 303/1, Speeches and Broadcast by J.C. Smuts, No. 126-127, November 1939 - December 1941.

86. DODA, UWH, 274, B.I. 25, ‘Active Service with the Artillery in South Africa’, Broadcast by a General Staff Officer on the Staff of the Directorate of Coast and Anti-Aircraft Artillery, 5 June 1941.

87. UKZN, Malherbe Collection, 143/1, KCM 56992 (18), Opportunity Calls: Women of South Africa, Janie Malherbe, 7 November 1941; DODA, UWH, 261, B.I. 17, Women and Industry, Broadcast, Talk by P.M. Anderson, Commandant of Command 14, 17 September 1941; DODA, UWH, 261, B.I. 17, Women and the War, 6 July 1943.

88. UKZN, Malherbe Collection, 143/1, KCM 56992 (18), Opportunity Calls: Women of South Africa, Janie Malherbe, 7 November 1941; SABC, *Annual Report*, 1943, 6-7.

and commentaries by South Africans regarding their experiences of the war. For example, talks were conducted by Dr H.J. van der Bijl (Union's director-general of War Supplies), Brigadier General J. Mitchell Baker (the UDF's quartermaster-general) and Brigadier General F.H. Theron (the UDF's general officer commanding of the East Africa Forces).⁸⁹

The SABC also extended limited broadcast services to black South Africans. The outbreak of the war gave impetus to the rise of a new wave of black political consciousness and activism against the country's repressive policies. Authorities received ongoing intelligence reports from informants on the prevalence of subversive activities among black South Africans. They feared that these were the work of the Nazi or Communist propagandists who were issuing fake promises of 'Utopia' for black South Africans, and claimed that these were aimed at inciting a revolt.⁹⁰ As such, propaganda measures were conceptualised specifically to ensure black people's loyalty and cooperation. Hence, government authorities were behind the limited broadcast services by the SABC in July 1940 with, again, the aim of combating subversive enemy propaganda and war apathy by communicating reliable news and by rebutting rumours.⁹¹

Until October 1945, such SABC broadcasts included war-related news bulletins, musical items, and popular talks in the indigenous languages of the Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho and Tswana people. Main propaganda themes included the depiction of Nazi Germany and Japan as cruel and untrustworthy.⁹² They also emphasised the importance of the king, venerating the British monarchy and exalting the traditional African kings such as Shaka, Moshweshwe and Hintsa, to stimulate black enthusiasm.⁹³ Black troops were also popularised to stimulate interest in military service. However, many blacks lost interest because the broadcasts failed to address the current political and socio-economic topics.⁹⁴

89. SABC, *Annual Report*, 1940, 12-13.

90. Archives of the Chief Native Commissioner (hereafter KJB), 496, N9/13/3, Minutes of the Meeting of the Bantu News Service Committee held at the Office of the Director of Native Labour, 5 June 1940; DODA, UWH, Box 279, B.I. 30, The Fifth Column in the Union and Elsewhere, Intelligence Summary, 18 May 1940.

91. NASAP, KJB, 496, N9/13/3, Minutes of the Meeting of the Bantu News Service Committee held at the Office of the Director of Native Labour, 11 July 1940; July 1940.

92. NASAP, Archives of the Secretary for Native Affairs (hereafter NTS), 2752, F11/246, Extracts from 'Daily War News Bulletin', 9 July 1940; 'Employers Should Check Nazi Lies', *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 July 1940.

93. NASAP, NTS, Box 9653, 520/400/9, Translation of a Broadcast Delivered by the Chief Native Commissioner, Natal, 27 July 1940.

94. NASAP, NTS, 9653, 520/400/9, Memorandum on Preliminary Inquiry into Reception of Government War News Service by A.I. Richards, 17 August 1940; NASAP, NTS, 9654, 520/400/9, SABC Director to Secretary for Native Affairs, 12 October 1945. See also Wiederroth, 'Radio Broadcasting for Blacks during the Second World War', 104-149.

The SABC expanded its operations by establishing a mobile recording unit (MRU) under a multi-lingual journalist, Bruce Anderson (English commentator), assisted by Johan Lamprecht (an engineer and Afrikaans commentator), Jimmy Chapman and Roland Sinclair. The goal was to increase reporting with direct actuality material. The MRU accompanied the UDF to East Africa, North Africa and Europe. Through the MRU, the SABC was able to bridge the broadcasting gap between the war zone and the Union.⁹⁵ In 1944, the UDF's signal corps installed an upgraded transmitter in Rome. This enabled rapid, direct transmission of war-related information from Italy to the Union.⁹⁶

The South African public could listen to live broadcasts by SABC reporters, war correspondents, radio observers, and even UDF troops.⁹⁷ As a result, radio increased in popularity as is illustrated by the number of radio subscriptions from the outbreak of the war. According to the SABC's annual reports, registered licences increased from 161 767 in 1936 to an impressive 365 244 in 1945. The SABC, inaugurated only in 1936, declared that the importance of its service increased as a result of the war.⁹⁸ However, the potential of pro-government radio propaganda was undermined by several factors: First, it was a relatively young service and, effectively, began three years too late – Zeesen Radio had been conducting propaganda since 1933. And second, as indicated above, Hertzog, who was sympathetic towards Nazi Germany, did not act against Zeesen because he was planning to keep South Africa out of European affairs. His preference was to remain neutral in the case of a war involving Britain. By failing to act, Hertzog allowed Zeesen to feed the growing wave of pro-Nazi ideas in the Union, a wave that swept along many Afrikaners.

Another shortcoming was that government officials were only allocated 30 minutes a day to issue statements in the broader SABC programming, mainly featuring entertainment and other news items. It also faced scepticism from some quarters. In reaction to the SABC propaganda efforts, nationalist Afrikaners accused Wilson of partisanship in that he used only the English language in the broadcasts, although it was Afrikaner opinion he was attempting to sway.⁹⁹ Some English newspapers such as the *Natal Daily News*, also criticised Wilson's counter-statements against Zeesen, saying they were 'unnecessary childish backchat'.¹⁰⁰ Other government loyalists also criticised Wilson's propaganda effort and its excessive English material, to the

95. See SABC, *Annual Reports*, Mobile Recording Unit, Programmes, 1941-1945. See also SABC, T 86/989-1999, Interview with James McClurg, Wartime Superintendent of News and Talks, by Christopher Dingle, May 1988.

96. DODA, PP, 41, B17, History of the Radio Unit, 19 April 1944 – 1 February 1945.

97. DODA, UWH, 162, Narep Info 16, 41, Cursory Survey of the South African Public Relations, by Maj J. Strydom, 30 November 1944; SABC, *Annual Report*, 1944, 5.

98. SABC, *Annual Report*, Statistics of Listeners' Licences, 1939-1945.

99. DODA, UWH, 265, B.I. 20, Intelligence Summaries, 10-17 November 1939.

100. 'Official Broadcast Criticised. Childish Backchat with Zeesen', *Natal Daily News*, 6 November 1939.

detriment of Afrikaner listeners.¹⁰¹ However, despite criticism of partisanship, preponderance of English programming and limited coverage, the radio remained a fundamentally important instrument in driving the government's war-related narrative and maintaining significant support for the war effort.¹⁰²

The written word: Print media propaganda

Besides radio broadcasts, the Union authorities also exploited the print media in its efforts to shape public opinion. This constituted a major element of government propaganda because of its diversity, range and visual impact, appearing in multiple forms such as magazines, newspapers and posters. The print media also had a prolonged existence, thus providing a sense of 'permanence' for posterity. For instance, people could read newspapers multiple times, pass them on to other readers, or keep them for future reference.

During the war, as Chetty observes, the printed media kept the 'reading public' informed about developments in the world and created 'a vision of the war in the minds of the population, both civilian and military'.¹⁰³ Due to internal divisions and competing agendas, Union authorities attempted to eliminate the risk of criticism from opposition factions, through the Voluntary Censorship Agreement.¹⁰⁴ However, some editors, mainly those from the Afrikaner opposition, did not sign it and often published negative information that was hostile towards the government.¹⁰⁵ This opposition notwithstanding, Union authorities exploited the printed media in an effort to mobilise the mass of the population to support the country's war effort.

The BOI distributed war-related material to newspapers for publication, and maintained a close watch on the South African newspapers for articles relating to the Union government. Newspapers published news items and pictures, framing the war in words designed to stimulate popular support for the government's policies. To engineer pro-war propaganda, pictures, posters and cartoons were published to

101. UKZN, Malherbe Collection, 432/7, KCM 56974 (544), Recognition of the Afrikaans Element in Propaganda, E.G. Malherbe to A. Wilson, 14 February 1941.

102. *Report of Commission of Enquiry into the Operations of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1941), 1-35; DODA, CGS War, 197, 42/1, Radio in Relation to Military Propaganda, G.C.G. Werdmuller to H. Wakefield, 21 April 1944. See also R. Teer-Tomaselli, 'In Service of the Empire: The South African Broadcasting Corporation during World War II', *Critical Arts*, 28, 6 (2014), 879-904.

103. Chetty, 'All the News', 30-53.

104. DODA, PP, 63, PU 6/9/4/, Report of Meeting of Newspaper Editors Consultative Committee in Pretoria, 23 October 1940.

105. DODA, UWH, 276, B.I. 28, Opposition Attacks on Government, September 1939-September 1940; DODA, CGS War, 197, 42/4, Press Censorship, Kreft to Wilson, 25 March 1942.

generate familiarity with war events, places, and prominent persons, and also to denigrate opponents of the government. For example, the Union's decision to enter the war was presented in the *Rand Daily Mail* as a single road, 'Die Pad van Suid Afrika' (The Road of South Africa), splitting into a fork. The message represented internal division, with South African leaders taking opposite directions: Hertzog following the 'dark and dangerous' path (Nazi Germany) and Smuts following the path of 'light and hope' in support of the Allies.¹⁰⁶

Pro-war newspapers urged the government to follow the Allies. Emotive appeals were evident in the depictions of Hitler and Nazi Germany. Animal-like archetypal labels such as 'the mad dog', were projected on Hitler; and Nazism was branded an evil system in the *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Express*.¹⁰⁷ To illustrate the danger of 'blind' support for 'untrustworthy' Nazi Germany, the *Sunday Express* used a cartoon which depicted a Czech man with his one hand tied to a pole, while Hitler looked on, with the caption, 'Nazi Allegiance'.¹⁰⁸ *The Forum* also produced dedicated features explaining the impact of Nazism on the less suspicious groups – such as the Afrikaners who were undecided where their allegiance lay. South Africans were warned against the duplicitous character of Hitler, who promised fake peace whilst preparing for the destruction of unsuspecting nations like Czechoslovakia, France and Austria.¹⁰⁹ *The Forum* spoke specifically to those considered fervent Afrikaner nationalists:

We wish to address the following to the Afrikaners ... many of you, especially the followers of Dr Malan and his policy, believe that Hitler will be the saviour of the Afrikaners ... only misled or indifferent people can expect liberty from Hitler.¹¹⁰

Nazi sympathisers, the 'indifferent Afrikaners', were warned that aligning with Nazi Germany meant 'bondage and denigration of the Afrikaans people to helots and slaves of the Hitler-System'.¹¹¹ Warnings of slavery, loss of political and personal liberties under Nazism and Hitler's false promises were frequently presented.¹¹² The governing United Party (UP) used the tactic of depicting Nazism negatively for two purposes: to rationalise the government's war policy against a tyrannical adversary – Hitler's Nazism; and, through name-calling and labelling, to stigmatise anti-war movements with pro-Nazi sympathies. For example, Malan's supporters were

106. 'The Fork in the Road', *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 September 1939.

107. 'The Mad Dog of Europe', *Sunday Times*, 3 September 1939; 'Nazism will be Destroyed', *Sunday Express*, 3 September 1939.

108. 'Cartoon News', *Sunday Express*, 23 July 1939.

109. 'Hitler's Doctrine of Fire and Sword', *The Forum*, 27 January 1940.

110. 'If Hitlerism is Not Halted', *The Forum*, 3 February 1940.

111. Ibid.

112. UCT, Morris Alexander Papers, BC160, List IV, 24, 'What the Nazis Think of the Afrikaners', Memorandum: 'South Africa for South Africans – Nor For Germany', n.d; 'Amazing Nazi Plot to Annex S.A. Revealed', *Sunday Times*, 1 September 1940; 'German Intrigue in the Union Disclosed', *The Star*, 3 September 1940.

characterised as ‘Malanzis’ and the NP was called the ‘Nazinale Party’, to project a negative connotation so as to elicit rejection by the South African public.¹¹³ In this regard, it was hoped that the public would be persuaded to realise that the future of the country lay with supporting Smuts and the war policy.

Afrikaner nationalist movements also exploited newspapers to contest the publicity and propaganda space. The anti-government press was predominantly Afrikaans and the pro-government press predominantly English, with a few Afrikaans papers supporting the government.¹¹⁴ The opposition press, particularly *Die Transvaler*, *Die Vaderland* and *Die Burger*, used every opportunity to attack and undermine the government’s war policy. For example, playing on Afrikaner sensitivities, *Die Transvaler* and *Die Vaderland* reported that in 1939 children’s festive season toys were being sold in the form of soldiers, tanks, submarines and warships.¹¹⁵ *Die Burger* accused Smuts of being an avid British imperialist who failed to address key national issues like the poor-white problem.¹¹⁶ It attacked the government’s war policy as ‘futile’, claiming that the only ray of hope came from the advancement of the ‘true’ Afrikaners.¹¹⁷ *Die Vaderland* also attacked the government’s use of radio broadcasts and mocked Arthur Wilson as a ‘little Adolph Wilson’ who would appear in a musical as ‘His Master’s Voice’.¹¹⁸ In most cases, the opposition papers advanced the exclusive Afrikaner nationalistic cause on the basis of racism and anti-Semitism.¹¹⁹ However, such efforts were offset by the English language papers which enjoyed a higher wartime circulation in the Union than the Afrikaans press.¹²⁰

113. DODA, UWH, 265, B.I. 20, Intelligence Summaries, 20 January 1940; University of South Africa (hereafter Unisa), United Party (UP) Archives, Intelligence Reports, ‘Nasionale becomes a Nazinale Party’, Nationalist Party Policy: A Series of Extracts from the Speeches of its Leaders, 1940-1944.

114. For example, *Die Volkstem* (Transvaal), *Die Suiderstem* (Western Cape), *Ons Land* (Eastern Cape), *Die Volk* (Transvaal) and *Die Vrystater* (OFS) were pro-government Afrikaans newspapers. The anti-government papers included *Die Vaderland* (Transvaal), *Die Transvaler* (Transvaal), *Die Burger* (Western Cape), *Die Oosterlig* (Eastern Cape) and *Die Volksblad* (OFS).

115. DODA, UWH, 265, B.I. 20, Intelligence Summaries, 25 November 1939.

116. University of the Witwatersrand, HPRA, Ossewabrandwag Records, A 726, A15, Opposition Press Reports, *Die Burger*, 27 September 1939.

117. DODA, UWH, 276, B.I. 28, Opposition Attacks on Government, *Die Burger*, 4 September 1940.

118. DODA, UWH, 265, B.I. 20, Intelligence Summaries, 10 November 1939.

119. See DODA, UWH, 276, B.I. 28, Opposition Attacks on Government, September 1940; ‘Die Gevaar is Binne’, *Die Transvaler*, 6 May 1941; ‘Proteste teen Wapening vir Nie-Blankes’, *Die Transvaler*, 1 April 1942; ‘Nie-Blankes Opgelei met Vuurwapens’, *Die Transvaler*, 8 April 1942.

120. According to Henry McNulty, the United Press Association correspondent in South Africa, by March 1943, the major English newspapers led by *The Sunday Times*, had a circulation of 80 000, then *The Star* with 65 000 and *Cape Times* with 40 000. The top Afrikaans paper, *Die Vaderland*, had 25 000 readers (its weekly country edition had 26 000), followed by *Die Transvaler* with 17 000 (2 500 for its country edition), and *Die Burger* with a circulation of 10 000.

As with radio broadcasts, newspapers were also utilised for public appeals. Smuts and his officials issued regular press statements in which they rationalised the entry of South Africa into the war.¹²¹ Similar themes regarding the efforts to preserve the country's freedom and independence against Nazi tyranny were common. They also emphasised South Africa's economic capacity and strategic value to the broader Allied war plan.¹²²

Through a combination of newspaper advertisements, posters and magazines, the authorities conducted various campaigns to aid recruitment.¹²³ Booklets such as *The Union at War: How to Join the Forces*, were published to create awareness about the UDF and units in which eligible members of the public could serve.¹²⁴ Magazines such as *Libertas* and *The Nongqai*, were produced and distributed to maintain war consciousness in the public mind.¹²⁵ *Libertas* magazine was published by the pro-government Union Unity Truth Service (UUTS) and ran pictorial biographies of the 'South African Heroes' during the war. The government also produced newsheets such as the *EA Force* and *Springbok* for white troops, while the *Ndlovu-Tlou* for black servicemen ran a weekly bulletin, *News of the War* in nine South African indigenous languages.¹²⁶ The BOI was instrumental in maintaining contact with the press to maximise publicity and appeals for war support.

Posters were also significant in stimulating public support for the war effort. The BOI commissioned commercial artists and advertising contractors for the design and production of propaganda posters.¹²⁷ These posters often had unique South African symbols like the orange flash – an orange shoulder tab worn by UDF members indicating an oath of loyalty and commitment to fight for the country beyond its immediate borders – appeared in Afrikaans and English to encourage recruitment and promote the war effort.¹²⁸ The posters were displayed in prominent public utility places such as post offices, railway stations, police stations, shops, defence recruiting

121. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, vol. 298/2, The British Colonial Empire, 15 February 1942.

122. DODA, CGS War, 201, VI 42/8, General Van Ryneveld, Press Interview, 21 February 1942.

123. 'Women Recruits', *The Star*, 21 August 1940; 'Women War Workers Rally', *Cape Argus*, 26 March 1941.

124. *The Union at War: How to Join Forces*, Department of Defence, Cape Town, 1 February 1940.

125. Wits, Archives of the Union Unity Truth Service (UUTS), A1883, 20, Union Unity Truth Service Annual Report, 1 July 1942 - 30 June 1943; *Libertas*, 1: 2, January 1941; *The Nongqai*, 1939-1945. See also Chetty, 'All the News', 30-53.

126. 'Libertas: A Great Success', *Torch Sparks*, No. 7, 13 January 1941; UCT, UUTS, A1883, 20, Union Unity Truth Service Annual Report, 1 July 1942-30 June 1943.

127. DODA, AG War, 6, 168/2/7/8, Establishment SAINC (V) – War Artist, 1 September 1943; 'SA War Artists', *The Nongqai*, October 1942; NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 150, The Bureau of Information: Present Activities, 21 May 1942.

128. See Pretorius, 'South African Union Defence Force Recruitment Posters', 41-69.

facilities and also on trains and buses.¹²⁹ The central theme in the government's propaganda rhetoric was that the Allied nations epitomised 'liberal traditions', 'democratic values' and 'freedom' which small nations like South Africa still 'enjoyed'. This was despite the reality that these 'traditions' were only enjoyed by whites in colonial Africa, including South Africa. In contrast, Nazism embodied 'tyranny, domination and oppression' – all being undesirable values. Conveniently, it was not acknowledged that these were all prevalent in South Africa.

Overall, the print media proved invaluable in the conduct of propaganda, especially because of its accessibility. Despite the obvious shortcomings of the press, notably that it was primarily accessible to literate members of the public, nonetheless, the story of South Africa's war effort and public appeals could be conveyed through pictures, both still and moving.

Visual propaganda: Mobile film and military tours

Union authorities also utilised films to stimulate enthusiasm for the war. They were well aware that film propaganda was a powerful tool of mass persuasion. Films, especially short newsreels and documentaries were seen as vital for shaping the minds of ordinary people including those with lower levels of literacy.¹³⁰ South Africa's wartime chief of Intelligence, Dr E.G. Malherbe, declared that the 'people who made films of a nation exerted an even greater influence than those who made laws'.¹³¹ He was not alone in this opinion. As Gadsden shows, British colonial authorities employed film propaganda in rural areas of Kenya to popularise the war effort.¹³² In West Africa and across southern Africa, as Smyth explores, mobile cinematographic exhibitions were exploited to appeal for collaboration and support for the war.¹³³ By 1939, the South African film industry had been developing for over forty years.¹³⁴

However, state authorities took time to exploit films for war propaganda. It was left to the *African Mirror*, a weekly commercial newsreel to produce 'patriotic items and inspiring commentary' to cultivate popular enthusiasm for the war effort.¹³⁵

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129. DODA, Army Intelligence, 20, I. 20, PR 23/4/2, Recruiting Drives, 10 September 1940; NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 150, The Bureau of Information: Present Activities, 21 May 1942.
 130. R. Smyth, 'The British Colonial Film Unit and Sub-Saharan Africa, 1939-1945', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 8, 3 (1988), 285-298.
 131. 'Use of Cinema to Speed up War Training', *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 August 1940.
 132. Gadsden, 'Wartime Propaganda', 401-420.
 133. Smyth, 'War Propaganda', 345-358; and Holbrook, 'British Propaganda', 347-361.
 134. For wider context on films in South Africa, see N. Parsons, *Black and White Bioscope: Making Movies in Africa, 1899-1925* (Pretoria: Protea, 2018); Tomaselli, *Encountering Modernity: Twentieth Century South African Cinema*; T. Gutsche, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa, 1895-1940* (Cape Town: Timmins, 1972).
 135. Gutsche, *The History of Motion Pictures*, 264, 345.

According to Emma Sandon, the *African Mirror* became a vital propaganda instrument in ‘projecting and reflecting’ the notion of ‘South Africanism’. Given the deep internal political divisions, ‘South Africanism’ as promoted by Smuts motivated the construction of white nationhood, based on the cooperation between English and Afrikaans speakers.¹³⁶ The *African Mirror* played a major propaganda role in depicting aspects of South Africa’s involvement in the war. The BOI exploited the *African Mirror* to produce newsreels focusing on recruitment drives, military parades and appeals for support in various towns across the Union.¹³⁷

The BOI also commissioned the company known as African Consolidated Films, owned by financier and entrepreneur from New York, Isadore William Schlesinger, to produce propaganda films.¹³⁸ ‘Fighters in the Veld’, recorded in English and Afrikaans, was the first propaganda film intended to mobilise public support and facilitate recruitment among white society.¹³⁹ ‘Fighters in the Veld’ reflected the ‘backveld’ origin of the troops, mainly the Afrikaners, who responded to a call by the Union leaders to defend their freedom. In this film, Smuts was exalted as a ‘man of action’ who led South Africa against the ‘Nazi threat and tyranny’. The leitmotif was clear: Promotion of South Africa’s war policy was a national duty. Phrases like ‘defend freedom’ and ‘national honour’ were used frequently.¹⁴⁰ In another film, entitled ‘Fall in’, South Africans were exhorted to unite behind the war effort.

Smuts was depicted as a former ‘Boer general’ who had served the Afrikaner nation selflessly in previous conflicts. He now continued to serve the Afrikaner cause by taking the lead in confronting the Nazi peril. Thus, he deserved maximum support from the nation.¹⁴¹ To reach the Afrikaner audience more effectively, an Afrikaans film, ‘Noordwaarts’ (To the North), was produced by the UUTS. This film presented nostalgic scenes of previous Afrikaner military triumphs and stressed the need to carry on the tradition of fighting for freedom, which was now under threat from Nazi Germany. The film was very popular and attracted large numbers of Afrikaner viewers, estimated by the UUTS in its annual report from July 1942 to June 1943, as

136. E. Sandon, ‘*African Mirror: The Life and Times of the South African Newsreel from 1910-1948*’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 3 (2013), 661-680. See also Grundlingh, ‘The King’s Afrikaners?’ 359-360.

137. South African Film, Video and Sound Archive, Pretoria (hereafter SAFVSA), *African Mirror*, vol. 9, no. 20, FA 2323, Recruiting Parade in Grahamstown, November 1939; *African Mirror*, vol. 10, no. 209, FA 5505, Call to Arms, June 1943; *African Mirror*, vol. 11, no. 307, FA 5430, Surrender of the City, May 1945.

138. Isadore William Schlesinger was a financier and film entrepreneur who also owned the South African Broadcasting Corporation which was sold to the Union government in 1936. See DODA, Diverse Archives, Group 1, Box 50, Broadcasting in South Africa, by C.W. Foley. No file reference.

139. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 150, The Bureau of Information: Present Activities, 21 May 1942; Gutsche, *The History of Motion Pictures*, 270.

140. SAFVSA, *Fighters in the Veld*, FA 2525, 1940.

141. Chetty, ‘Imagining National Unity’, 106-130.

200 000 viewers per year for the duration of the war.¹⁴² ‘Noordwaarts’ was supplemented by other Afrikaans propaganda films such as ‘Trekgees’, ‘Springbokke Storm’ and ‘Onthou Japan’.¹⁴³

Film propaganda was also used to mobilise black support. Films such as ‘Ayihlome’ and ‘Uyafuneka’, which promoted military service, were shown across the Union by means of mobile vans, and, again, depicted historical African warrior chiefs such as Shaka, Moshweshwe and Hintsa. However, such films, which depicted black soldiers carrying outdated weapons (assegais instead of guns), were criticised by Africans: they did not align with black aspirations for equality and social justice.¹⁴⁴ Nonetheless, films became an integral part of the broader South African war propaganda initiative.

The Union authorities also organised recruitment tours and staged live demonstrations including parades, exhibitions of various military hardware, air displays by aircraft and shooting demonstrations at public gatherings. The Steel Commando (1940), War Train (1941) and the Air Commando (1941), were among the main attractions during military demonstrations.¹⁴⁵ These mobile tours served the purpose of visual propaganda and brought the public closer to aspects of South Africa’s war machine in order to generate a ‘sense of nationalist pride’.¹⁴⁶

Concluding perspectives

Reflecting on the state of the Union in 1944, Smuts struck a note of confidence:

In spite of difficulties, a divided public, a political situation that had always to be carefully watched, subversive movements, sabotage and the absence of transport and supplies, we could preserve our social and industrial peace ... we were more free from strikes and other disturbances than ever before.¹⁴⁷

142. Wits, UUTS, A1883, 20, Union Unity Truth Service Annual Report, 1 July 1942-30 June 1943; Grundlingh, ‘The King’s Afrikaners?’ 357-358.

143. Wits, UUTS, A1883, 20, Union Unity Truth Service Annual Report, 1 July 1942-30 June 1943.

144. SAFVSA, *Ayihlome*, A 302, 1942; DODA, Archives of the Native Military Corps (hereafter NMC), 12, NAS 3/21, *Ayafuneka*, Maxwell to Gutsche, 7 May 1942; NASAP, NTS, 9127, 68/363/18, DNEAS to Secretary for Native Affairs, 20 January 1942.

145. DODA, CGS War, 207, VI, 45/4, Military Recruiting Tours, Werdmuller to the AG, October 1940; DODA, AG 3, 344, 154/203/10, Defence-Railways-War Supplies Demonstration Tour: ‘War Trains’, Werdmuller to All Section Heads, 17 March 1941; DODA, CGS War, 207, 45/4, Air Commando Tour of the Union, Director of Recruiting to Quartermaster General, July 1941.

146. Grundlingh, ‘The King’s Afrikaners?’, 356.

147. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, 304/2, Speeches and Broadcast: United Party Congress, 11 October 1944.

However, Smuts's confident perspective should be assessed with caution. Indeed, the outbreak of the war in September 1939 created new political turmoil in South Africa. As Bill Nasson observes, it was a 'messy, controversial and unresolved story of a reluctant war'.¹⁴⁸ Participation in the war was contested and the underlying fractures in society became even more evident than before. Anti-war attitudes, particularly among Afrikaners, created apathy (at best) and undermined public and military morale. The majority of black South Africans also displayed ambivalence towards the war, and political agitation focused instead on campaigns for political rights. As a result, confronted with the absence of broad national support, from October 1939 the Smuts government instituted an extensive multi-media publicity and propaganda campaign in an effort to mobilise a fractured society and to secure positive results in the various spheres of wartime activity.

To ascertain whether propaganda attained the desired effect, as Jowett and O'Donnell emphasise, 'propaganda must be evaluated according to its ends', in other words, whether 'some specific goals have been achieved'.¹⁴⁹ In the context of South Africa, the central aim of propaganda was to rally the fractured society to unite behind the country's war policy. As we have seen, the focus of the main effort was to break-down pro-Nazi inclinations through counter-propaganda (against Zeesen), to stimulate public interest in order to secure military volunteers and to preserve national morale, mainly among the white citizenry. However, by the time the Smuts government made up its mind about propaganda, the 'enemies of the Government's war policy had a flying start and it [was] difficult to make up the leeway'.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, state propaganda had mixed results although it did aid recruitment to some extent.

Due to the impact of anti-war activism and divided loyalties, the pace of recruitment was very slow.¹⁵¹ After months of propaganda, extensive mobile tours, and popular appeals, the authorities did indeed record some success. In August 1941, the country's military strength had increased from 20 000 to 130 000 trained men. By June 1943, the figure stood at 169 000 white men and women as well as 102 000 members of the 'Non-European Army Services' (NEAS). By 1945, the total number of UDF troops was more than 340 000.¹⁵² As Grundlingh observes, given the political tensions and 'anti-war sentiments within Afrikaner circles', the number of volunteers was surprisingly high. Part of the reason was the impact of pro-government propaganda, but others joined the UDF out of economic necessity, peer pressure,

148. Nasson, *South Africa at War*, 10-11.

149. Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 279, 286.

150. DODA, UWH, 265, B.I. 20, Intelligence Summaries, 25 November 1939.

151. DODA, UWH, 265, B.I. 20, Intelligence Summaries, 1939-1940; UKZN, Malherbe Collection, 143/2, KCM 56992 (16), General Report: Recruiting Tour through Northern and Eastern Transvaal by Lt J. Malherbe, 18 December 1941.

152. DODA, UWH, 240, B.I. 2, The South African Armed Forces at War, 1-6, 20 January 1944. See also DODA, CGS War, 210, VIII, 45/8, Analysis of Recruiting Figures, 1941-1945.

adventure and patriotic fervour.¹⁵³ Yet, despite this apparent success in military recruitment, almost half of the UDF troops remained in the Union to contain the anti-war activists or because they did not sign the oath to serve beyond the borders of the country.

In terms of morale, surveys conducted by intelligence officials estimated that the mood in the Union was seldom high. In February 1942, for example, a censorship report indicated a low level of civilian morale. It highlighted the growing 'despondency, disappointment, nerviness and discouragement'. Such feelings were attributed to the impact of the anti-war activism. There were also doubts about the 'veracity of the press and radio' as well as the Allies' ability to win the war. The report summed up the state of public morale and despondency in three words: 'bewilderment, distrust and fear'.¹⁵⁴ In June 1942, after South Africa had suffered a resounding defeat at Tobruk, Lybia, losing 10 722 UDF troops, the defeat was seen as a national disaster. Censorship reports highlighted 'disappointment and heartache' by the public and criticised the Smuts government for the ineffective running of the war.¹⁵⁵ For the opposition, the Tobruk disaster was a justification of their objections to the war policy. Government supporters urged for immediate counter-action. Authorities waged an aggressive propaganda campaign under the slogan, 'Avenge Tobruk'.¹⁵⁶ In January 1943, about 12 000 recruits signed up, exceeding the requirement of 10 000.¹⁵⁷ Thus, propaganda efforts would seem to have been effective.

In August 1943, another report titled: 'Memorandum on Apathy in the U.D.F. towards the War', revealed widespread dejection, both within the UDF and among civilians. This was attributed to war weariness and general complacency. People's priorities had also changed despite the propaganda effort. It was reported that the public was more concerned with the social and economic conditions after the war.¹⁵⁸ Many were concerned about the country's economy. The prevailing apathy was influenced by the notion that, 'no man [was] certain whether he should defend his country or himself'.¹⁵⁹

153. Grundlingh, 'The King's Afrikaners? 354-362; Roos, *Ordinary Springboks*, 30-31; and Grundlingh, 'The Military, Race and Resistance', 71-88.

154. DODA, Army Intelligence, 46, CE 2/15, Low Level of Morale on the Home Front, 24 February 1942.

155. DODA, Army Intelligence, Box 50, I. 44 (E), Memorandum Regarding Public Reaction to the Fall of Tobruk and Mersa Mantruh, 7 July 1942.

156. DODA, CGS (War), 207, VI 45/5, 'Avenge Tobruk' Recruiting Drive, Director of Recruiting to all Recruiting Officers, 29 June 1942.

157. DODA, AG (War), 4, 168/2/2/2, Proposed Establishment, Sub-Section Director of Military Intelligence, 14 January 1943.

158. DODA, Archives of the Quartermaster General (hereafter QMG), Group 1, 104, Q 91/339, Morale in the Army, 25 August 1943.

159. DODA, PP, 63, PU 6/9/4, Final Military Publicity Campaign, 14 January 1944.

On a broad scale, the Union's wartime publicity and propaganda effort met with limited success. Government propaganda, through the radio, print media and films were largely focused on anti-Nazi diatribes and encouraged a united war effort. However, endeavours to achieve national cohesion and unity were undermined by persistent realities such as racial prejudice, socio-economic privation and diverse political loyalties embedded in the social structure of South African society. Black South Africans in particular, were sceptical and resented the government's discriminatory policies which contradicted the propaganda rhetoric of fighting for democratic values.

Although Smuts weathered the political storm during the war, the alienation of many Afrikaners, combined with difficult socio-economic conditions and black political agitation undermined the 'unity' propaganda project. Three years later, a general election was looming. Smuts's political adversary, a Nazi sympathiser, D.F. Malan and his National Party (NP), seized the opportunity to mobilise support, and in May 1948 they eclipsed the governing United Party (UP) at the polls to take control.

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