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Rebuffing Royals ? Afrikaners and the Royal Visit to South Africa in 1947

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This article traces the responses of Afrikaners to the symbolism and political purposes of the 1947 royal visit to South Africa, the first post-war royal tour and the first visit of a reigning sovereign to any dominion. Taking place in the aftermath of a war which had caused political schism within Afrikaner ranks and stimulated radical populist nationalism, a royal tour intended to express the crown's gratitude for South Africa's participation in that war was bound to be controversial. Drawing on press, biographies and autobiographies, and archival sources in the UK and South Africa, this article argues that the layered reactions of Afrikaners demonstrates that even on the eve of the National Party's electoral victory of 1948 on a republican and apartheid platform, attitudes towards monarchy and the British connection were more fluid and ambiguous than either contemporary propaganda or recent accounts have allowed. The diverse meanings attributed to this iconic royal tour reveals a process of intense contestation and reflection about South Africa's place in an empire that was in the throes of post-war redefinition and transformation, and confirms recent characterisations of the 1940s as one of manifold possibilities such that outcomes such as the National Party victory was far from pre-determined.

*'A Royal Tour of Great Significance'*¹

On 24 April, 1947 as the *HMS Vanguard* turned from the Cape Town docks towards the open seas on the return trip after the British Royal Family's three-month tour of Southern Africa, it was open season for pronouncing on the visit's impact and significance. Expressing hopes for the possible benefits of this 'unique historical event', *Die Suiderstem*, the Afrikaans-language mouthpiece of the ruling United Party tempered enthusiasm with a measure of circumspection; 'it would be the task of future historians' ran the editorial, 'to determine what the joyful results for our country were, how it influenced social and political matters and how it contributed to the standing and prestige of South Africa in the outside world in these crisis days of world statecraft.'²

This iconic royal tour - the first to take place after the Second World War, the first visit of a reigning sovereign with his entire family to a dominion at a pivotal early moment in British

decolonization, and the occasion on which the future Queen Elizabeth famously dedicated her life to serving the Commonwealth - attracted lavish commentary at the time and has featured consistently in royal biographies and political memoirs. However, whether it is because it was considered too ephemeral a phenomenon or a distraction from the momentous political developments of the day, historians of South Africa have been tardy in taking up *Die Suidersstem's* challenge to examine an event that was considered by contemporaries to be of epochal significance for Union.³ Indeed, the historiographical silence has contributed to an impression that the royal visit affected the monarchy and imperial metropole more profoundly than it did South Africans. Whether its significance indeed lay in reconciling Britain to its imperial losses, a task begun with the young princess' 21st birthday speech in Cape Town or in its impact on the future Queen in shaping her lifelong Commonwealth interest and loyalty⁴, far less is known about its influence on 'social and political' matters in the Union and on the country's 'standing and prestige' in a mercurial and unstable post war world. In considering the responses of Afrikaners, the majority component of South Africa's 'ruling race' whose loyalty to the crown had long been in question, this article begins to address the questions raised by *Die Suidersstem*, bringing into closer alignment a growing historiography of global Britishness, monarchy and the Empire with that of Afrikaner political and cultural nationalism in the post war years.

Precedents and Purposes

The idea of a royal tour to South Africa after the war was mooted by Prime Minister Jan Smuts well before the Allied victory, with 1946 as the proposed date. The fact that the invitation came from a statesman of Smuts' luminous stature guaranteed its acceptance by two institutions intent on making the monarchy relevant to the post-war empire and world, but the king was not prepared to come immediately after the war on the grounds that there was too much to be done at

home. It was thus agreed that the visit would take place in 1947 and that it would be the first of a series of dominion royal tours to thank his subjects for their contributions to the war effort.⁵

Although there were many precedents for royal visits to South Africa, the 1939 royal visit to Canada and the United States which was widely credited for consolidating Canadian, and cultivating American support for Britain on the eve of war demonstrated that the soft power of a glittering royal visit might well also have beneficial effects in the empire's most divided dominion at a moment of national and global political uncertainty.

Inaugurated in the later nineteenth century as part of a strategy to associate the monarchy more closely with its imperial subjects, and made possible on ever grander scale in the twentieth century by technological transformations that made long distance travel possible, transoceanic royal tours were likened by one colonial administrator to prolonged coronation processions in keeping with the 'kingly tradition'.⁶ By the twentieth century, inspired by the vision of George V, who had visited South Africa in 1901 as Duke of Cornwall and York as part of his world-wide tour, the 'invented tradition' of imperial monarchy was further embellished over the first half of the century in ever more ambitious royal progresses.⁷ In the 1920s, the 'smiling' empire tours of the Prince of Wales included a visit to South Africa in 1925, followed in 1934 by the tour of Prince George. In addition to the larger aim of promoting imperial cohesion, a consistent purpose of the South African royal visits was to use the symbolism of the crown to promote the unity of the white 'races' and reconcile Afrikaner nationalists and republicans to the imperial tie. This became ever more pressing as the devolution of power to the Dominions advanced from the 1920s and as nationalism took hold amongst Afrikaners in an era of unprecedented social and economic upheavals that extruded more and more Afrikaners from the *platteland*, depositing them in the English-dominated towns and cities. Notwithstanding centrifugal forces within the empire and the growing support for republican and nationalist agendas at home, some success for royal diplomacy in promoting amity between English and Afrikaner was claimed by a former Governor General, Lord Buxton, following the visit of the Prince of Wales to South Africa in 1925, a visit hosted by a predominantly nationalist

government; 'racial feeling was a passing phase' he confidently proclaimed.⁸ The visit of Prince George, the king's younger son and future Duke of Kent almost ten years later was likewise seen as offering 'a message of hope - hope that the monster of racial cleavage would never again be allowed to raise its venomous head'.⁹

While Smuts' 1945 invitation to the Royal Family to visit South Africa was originally intended to give the king the opportunity to recuperate after the strains of the war and to thank his imperial subjects for their war time contributions, the political changes that took place in the immediate post war years meant that other diplomatic, political and economic advantages to the South African government could be readily perceived. Indeed, the South African government pursued a number of ends in organising a tour which, far from a recuperative holiday, proved extremely taxing to King George VI and took a savage toll on his health. Undoubtedly, by 1947, when the royal party arrived in South Africa, there was truth in the claim of some Afrikaner nationalist critics that Smuts was hoping to draw on the reflected glow of monarchy for his faltering United Party but it was also hoped more generally that the tour would assist in promoting white unity and solidarity in the face of international opprobrium following the United Nation's condemnation of the government's discriminatory treatment of Indians in the new organisation's inaugural general assembly in the previous year. The Department of Native Affairs also believed that the extensive media coverage of colourful African *indabas* and 'ocular' evidence of benign trusteeship and development in the 'native' reserves could be exploited to project South Africa's controversial segregationist policies in a positive light and thereby counter the adverse publicity occasioned by both widespread African political disaffection and an incipient international critique of the country's racial policies.¹⁰ A successful tour might also confirm South Africa's new-found international stature attained by her performance as an Allied partner in the war, whilst for Smuts personally, for whom the transition from war to peace was especially difficult, the tour offered recognition as a Commonwealth statesman.¹¹ The copious coverage of the tour and its key events in film, newspaper, broadcast, medals, paintings and photographs made it possible for its proponents to project highly particular

visions of South Africa for both global and local consumption. Alongside prolific and deferential depictions of the royal family, images of the country's majestic landscape, indigenous flora and fauna, architectural heritage, technological sophistication and agricultural and industrial bounty that featured in the tour ephemera were pressed into the service of the United Party's creed of white 'South Africanism' directed at local audiences. Rooted in nineteenth-century Cape Anglo-Afrikaner cooperation and in the conciliatory gestures of the Afrikaner leaders Louis Botha and Jan Smuts after the South African War, 'South Africanism' championed a white national identity based on bilingualism and mutual respect for the contributions of both English and Afrikaner to South African nationhood. Emphasising the indivisibility of the crown and the virtues of the commonwealth connection, this 'Dominion South Africanism' was also a broad cultural movement that sought to avoid celebrations of or nostalgia for, the country's divisive past. Reaching its highpoint during the Second World War when it was invigorated by a vision of a more inclusive society, it was, however, the earlier, more conservative incarnation that was emphasised in the imagery of the tour with its celebration of white civilisation, modernity and scientific progress in Africa. It was personified by Jan Smuts himself whose prominence matched that of the Royal Family during the royal visit.¹²

For Buckingham Palace, acknowledging the wartime contributions of Southern Africa's was an important priority. During the war, the king's proposal to visit to his 'forgotten army' in Burma in 1944 and meet with his subjects in India had been disallowed by the cabinet; Smuts' invitation thus provided the first opportunity after the war for the royal family to present themselves directly before the peoples of the empire and to express Britain's gratitude for their sacrifices.¹³ The king's high regard for, and sense of obligation to, Smuts was critical too; one biographer suggests that a tacit purpose of the royal visit was to contribute to Smuts' chances of electoral victory by courting the favour of those Afrikaners who 'had little use for the empire, still less for its titular monarch'.¹⁴

Planned for the 'watershed' year in the history of the Empire/Commonwealth with Burma, India and Pakistan on the verge of independence, the king regarded this tour as carrying as much, if

not greater significance than the visits he had already paid to Canada and Australia.¹⁵ In turn, the ambitions of Buckingham Palace – in wanting to convince South Africans ‘that the British Monarchy is an investment worth keeping’ - dovetailed with those of the new Labour Party government which envisaged a re-invented role for the monarchy in the post war world. While the king saw himself presiding over an empire of ‘free peoples’, Labour Party politicians embraced the idea of a ‘non-political’ supra-national and liberal monarchy that would emphasise a moralised imperialism and serve as an apt symbol for an inclusive and multiracial Commonwealth.¹⁶ Although a ‘white’ dominion, South Africa’s majority population of Africans and significant minorities of Indians and coloureds in its polyglot cities made it a fitting backdrop to portray this new Commonwealth. The British government was thus prepared to accept a ‘reasonable’ degree of pageantry; crucially, and it was Prime Minister Clement Attlee who insisted that the King remain in South Africa when the latter suggested returning in view of the excruciating winter privations suffered by his subjects at home. For a war-exhausted and near-bankrupt Britain, a spectacular visit could demonstrate its claim to world power status and boost its prestige; the Royal Navy’s most powerful battleship *HMS Vanguard* that transported the royal family to Cape Town, the fleets of Viking planes and gleaming Daimlers, British-made ivory and gold carriages of the ‘White Train’ and the Norman Hartnell-designed dresses of the Queen and the Princesses proclaimed a material strength that belied Britain’s financial weakness and its dependence on its war-battered and attenuated empire.¹⁷

To ensure that King came into the closest contact with the widest cross section of the population, ‘constant travel, up and down and in and out of the whole Union’ was deemed essential. Consequently, after a rapturous four-day reception in Cape Town, the ceremonial opening of Parliament by the king, the royal family undertook a 49-day, 10 000 mile progress in the ‘White Train’ through the vast Southern African terrain. Following similar routes to those taken by the Princes Edward and George - though giving a wide berth to the nationalist strongholds in the western Transvaal, and making a comparatively perfunctory visit to the Witwatersrand with its growing Afrikaner constituencies - the royal family travelled through the Cape, Free State,

Basutoland, Natal, Swaziland and the Transvaal, and thereafter to Southern and Northern Rhodesia and Bechuanaland before returning to Cape Town.¹⁸ Since 1901, the organisation of royal tours was in the hands of the Dominion governments, and so it was the South Africans who planned the itineraries, drafted speeches and arranged all the ceremonies and engagements in consultation with the king's private secretary. The creation of an interdepartmental committee coordinated by the Department for External Affairs under the secretary to the prime minister ensured that Smuts was directly involved in the tour's planning.¹⁹ Itineraries were tightly controlled and modelled along the lines of the Canadian royal tour of 1939 with its repetitive pattern of civic ceremonies, banquets, garden parties, balls and receptions with white worthies, notables and veterans and 'spontaneous' stops at wayside halts in the countryside. The uniquely South African features of the tour - *indabas* with massed assemblies of 'tribal' Africans, segregated gatherings of Africans, 'coloureds' and Indians in the cities, visits to game reserves and events crafted to incorporate and honour Afrikaner cultural tradition - were based on those developed in the 1925 and 1934 royal visits to the Union and in the periodic peregrinations of governors general, though as some critics pointed out, these local innovations were no less clichéd. The present article focuses on those 'invented' rituals and staged encounters that were designed for Afrikaner audiences and on the often ambivalent receptions they elicited.

Following shortly after a war that had alienated large sections of the Afrikaner political and popular classes from the Union and British governments and occurring at a moment of nationalist and republican resurgence and bitter divisions between English- and Afrikaans-speakers, the potential for disruption of the visit was of concern to organisers from the moment the tour was announced. That no boycotts or embarrassing disruptions by Afrikaners took place was cause for relief for the authorities and organisers and this in turn gave rise to somewhat triumphal accounts of the tour that made great play of the 'healing' power of the king's presence and its capacity to soften 'political acerbities' in the land.²⁰ The positive gloss given in the English language and British press during and immediately after the tour and the cautiously optimistic prognostications of the

High Commissioner Evelyn Baring, about its longer-term effects in weakening Afrikaner nationalism was epitomised in Dermot Morrah's official account, *Royal Family in Africa*, and contrasts with the more jaundiced perspectives of royal biographies, memoirs, popular accounts and recent histories of South Africa. Emphasizing Afrikaner antipathy, the edgy and tense atmosphere of an exhausting tour in a sweltering summer is noted, for example, by royal biographer Sarah Bradford who writes that the king was 'tired to death at being ordered about and sleuthed by Afrikander policemen wherever they moved' while 'the Boer-supported Nationalist Party remained aloof and unforgiving of the British, their press hostile'.²¹ In similar vein, the BBC journalist, Brian Hanrahan, comparing the Queen's 1995 visit to the newly democratic South Africa with the 1947 tour noted that during the earlier visit, 'the Afrikaners who had opposed helping Britain in the war just stayed away.'²² These emphases, combined with hindsight knowledge of the electoral victory of Dr D.F. Malan's republican National Party in the following year, the introduction of *apartheid* and later, the withdrawal of South Africa from the Commonwealth, have meant that the tour has generally been depicted as something of a failure, an expensive folly and indulgence of the Prime Minister Jan Smuts in his declining years. Historian Leslie Witz emphasises the inability of the tour organisers to dissociate the royal visit from imperial imagery and thereby capture the imagination of Afrikaners, whilst David Welsh argues that the pre-occupation of Jan Smuts with the royal visit contributed to the United Party's defeat at the polls in 1948.²³

Whilst the forthcoming election was certainly on the minds of contemporaries during the tour, we suggest that using white South African electoral politics as a measure of the tour's significance and meaning for the hundreds of thousands of individuals who formed welcoming crowds or avidly consumed the images and ephemera it generated is to view it through too restricted a lens. Apart from occluding the experience of the majority population, such an angle of vision imputes exclusively and unchanging instrumental purposes to this marathon royal progress, blurring its multiple agendas and excluding the possibilities of unexpected responses to, and improvisations in, an otherwise tightly scripted pageant. If it ignores the significance attributed to it

by the majority African and other 'non-European' populations, it underplays the variability of Afrikaner engagements, masking the extent to which *Afrikanerdom* was politically fractured and divided in attitudes towards the monarchical connection, republicanism and British culture on the eve of the Nationalist accession to power. By highlighting the range of meanings projected on to the royal visit by Afrikaners, the debates and discussions it instigated about political loyalties and South Africa's place in the world, the impact on the senses of unprecedented spectacle and sounds, and the affective responses to the presence of a young and attractive royal *family*, we explore a hitherto unexamined aspect of the cultural and political struggle for Afrikaner allegiance that took place in a 'decade of possibilities'.²⁴ Complementing the scholarship that examines the cultivation of Afrikaner nationalism by political elites through appeals to 'sacred' Afrikaner history, culture, and language in the 1940s, we explore the attempts made in the post-war years by the Union's political leaders to conjure support for a broader reconciliatory white 'South Africanism' within the framework of a re-invented Commonwealth presided over by a modern monarch who was also styled 'King of South Africa'. Whether Jan Smuts and United Party leaders genuinely believed that the royal family's presence could detach avowed Afrikaner nationalists from their allegiances and reconcile them to the imperial connection, much faith was placed in the capacity of the crown, to carry wide, if diffuse, appeal. Conversely, the variegated responses elicited from Afrikaner communities suggest that as a personal symbol, monarchy was indeed sufficiently broad symbolically to be imagined selectively and variously by its white non-British Southern African subjects.²⁵

As in 1925 and 1934, the announcement of a royal tour was contentious in Afrikaner nationalist circles in which the crown was associated with imperial domination and English cultural hegemony.²⁶ The emphasis on commemoration and celebration of the country's participation in a controversial war rankled with those who had opposed it and who regarded Smuts as 'the War Office's finest Boer general of 1940'. From the start, official (parliamentary) nationalists sought to make their position plain. In 1946 at the first announcement of the pending royal visit, leader of the National Party, Dr D.F. Malan declared in parliament that he regarded it as a 'delicate' situation which was of some concern to the 'republican minded' section of the South African population. It has to be realised, he argued, that those of a republican persuasion could lay claim to a 'specific history' and that the sensitivities of that past should be recognised. However, Malan went on, the nationalists are fully aware that the monarchy is elevated above party politics and they would accord respect to the king as the head of the British Empire. In turn, he urged, the United Party should refrain from using the visit to promote their own brand of electioneering politics.²⁷ In an unusual show of apparent unanimity Smuts thanked Malan for this exposition and agreed that it would be 'despicable' to use the occasion for political purposes.²⁸ The London *Times* confidently, if prematurely, claimed that Smuts' undertaking not to call for the dissolution of government for a year after the tour had assuaged the opposition's fears that he would use the loyal enthusiasm to party account.²⁹

Whilst this was the public face both politicians sought to present, at the time of the royal tour almost a year later, there was greater disarray in nationalist ranks than earlier anticipated. P.W. Botha, (a future Prime Minister and President of South Africa) serving then as the 'propaganda official' for the National Party, bemoaned the fact that the Afrikaans press failed to speak with one voice on the visit. Divergent views on the matter, he cautioned, would play into the hands of the United Party.³⁰ It would indeed appear that there was not a clear cut position on the visit from the parties or press. Government intelligence services reported that in 'various parts of the Union --- the Nationalist Party is hopelessly divided on the question of welcoming the visitors and thus making the

English speaking section believe that after all the Nationalists are not as black as they are painted.'³¹ The English language press was also baffled by the somewhat erratic National Party behaviour during the tour. Journalists pointed out that Dr Malan was not there to welcome the royal party at the Cape Town docks upon their arrival, but attended the state banquet in honour of the king where he refrained from singing 'God Save the King'. In the Free State some nationalist mayors attended the ceremonies, others were absent. In trying to explain this, the press claimed that that the nationalist politicians deliberately played a double game. By attending some functions and not others, it was argued, they sought to satisfy their own supporters without alienating English speakers altogether.³² Whether the nationalists consciously adopted such a tactics is a moot point, but it certainly reflected ambivalence and division; according to one report the National Party had agreed that individuals might attend what they regarded as social functions while there was no clear position on participating or attending 'political' functions.

The ambiguity, however, revolved more around strategy than fundamental political differences in Afrikaner ranks. Politically there were solid reservations about the royal visit, but the extraordinary profile of the visitors meant that the issue was rather *how* it should be received and portrayed. This gave rise to some tension. *Die Transvaler* under the editorship of H.F. Verwoerd refused to publish anything on the visit. He based this on an assumption that any kind of reportage would compromise the nationalists and could be seen as giving credence to a visit which should never have taken place. Even a hard-line nationalist politician like J.G. Strijdom who (like Verwoerd) was destined to become prime minister and was a fellow board member of *Die Transvaler* found Verwoerd's editorial policy on the matter wrongheaded. Strijdom berated Verwoerd as short-sighted in refusing to report on such undeniably news-worthy events. Such a policy could only harm the newspaper as Afrikaans speakers would go elsewhere to obtain information. It could not do the republican cause any harm, Strijdom concluded, to publish small news items and at the same time indicate what a money wasting exercise the royal venture was.³³ Other newspapers reflected some of this strategic ambiguity. Whereas the press of the extra-parliamentary extreme right wing, such as

Die Ossewa Brandwag and *Die Nuwe Orde* ignored or criticised the tour, newspapers representing moderate nationalist opinion such as *Die Vaderland* covered the tour throughout, and even shifted ground over the three months from initial wariness to heaping praise on the Queen and castigating the National Party for its inconsistency. *Die Volksblad* likewise changed tack during the tour, arguing that by absenting themselves from key events, nationalists were not only flouting the Status Act by which the king remained the king of South Africa, but were alienating potential English-speaking supporters who had been so galvanised by the royal visit.³⁴ This newspaper made a clear that while this 'foreign' king had been made 'our' king through circumstances over which Afrikaners had no control, as guests of the government, he and his family were South Africa's guests and thus due the hospitality of a head of state. *Die Burger* had been consistent in its restraint, insisting on correctness in comportment but simultaneously deploring what it saw as the excessive gushing of the English-language press.³⁵ The English newspapers, especially in the Orange Free State, in turn monitored Afrikaans press reactions and were quick to note Afrikaans reports that downplayed popular enthusiasm amongst Afrikaners or that were accompanied by photographs of scenes when crowds were thin *after* the royal entourage had passed.³⁶

As the visit progressed certain nationalist politicians became perturbed by what they regarded as an unacceptable trend in proceedings from which Jan Smuts as Prime Minister stood to gain by his constant association with the royal family. In particular P.J. van Nierop, Nationalist MP for Mossel Bay voiced the opinion that 'the King was invited at this time in order to help the United Party at the next election--- Jan Smuts is being glorified more and more.' One of Van Nierop's complaints was that school children were handed miniature Union Jacks instead of South African flags to welcome the royal family. That ran contrary to a South African spirit, he averred. He was convinced that the government was 'engaged at this moment in making political capital out of the King's visit.' It would be a pity he continued, as a 'fine spirit has prevailed up to the present'.³⁷ Van Nierop articulated an underlying National Party concern, but one which was often suppressed in public as the party was careful not to be dragged into an unseemly political wrangle about a visit

that was ostensibly above party political matters. Whilst the observations and objections to the implicit political dimensions might well have been valid, given the visitors' eminence and the exhaustive publicity given to their every movement, it was another matter to drive them home without running the risk of appearing boorish.

Such circumspection did not prevent individuals from stating their views more explicitly. One such person was General J.G. Kemp, a nationalist politician with a distinguished Anglo-Boer War background. 'The position of the Afrikaner and Republican is clear', he said. 'Those of us who took part in the --- War [Anglo-Boer War], or whose forebears took part, and who have since striven and are still striving for a Republic in South Africa --- cannot take part in a festivity which will strengthen the monarch in the Union.'³⁸ In similar vein a pamphlet produced by the right wing Ossewa Brandwag (O.B.) entitled *Die Koning! Is Hy Welkom? (The King! Is He Welcome?)* was widely circulated despite the fact that the O.B. was increasingly politically marginalised by this time. Styled as an organ for *volksinligting* (information for the *volk*), the authorship was kept secret, but it was suspected that it had been written by a student at the University of Pretoria on account of its 'pretentious references to the science of mass psychology'. The pamphlet rehearsed Afrikaner history with a particular emphasis on the Anglo-Boer War as the triumph of British imperialism which reduced Afrikaners to serfs in their own country. Subsequently, it claimed, Afrikaner culture was consistently undermined by the British with a view of replacing what they regarded as a *bywonerkultuurtjie* (inferior underclass culture) with an overpowering and superior British culture. It warned against subtle British propaganda associated with the royal visit. 'Stories' about British greatness, magnanimity and protection were the stock-in trade of imperialists and designed to influence Afrikaners to imbibe British propaganda like 'geese swallowing earthworms after a rainstorm.' Given the British point of departure it could not be expected of Afrikaners to welcome someone who 'symbolised the destruction of our Afrikaans values.' At the same time though, in an attempt to demonstrate a sense of even-handedness, it sought to reassure English speakers in South

Africa that they would not stoop so low as to disrupt celebrations in honour of personages which the latter held in high esteem.³⁹

The O.B. maintained its complaints. They welcomed the announcement of the decision to grant amnesty to prisoners in accordance with traditions of royal tours, but requested that it not be associated with 'the British King': Referring to war-time internees imprisoned for 'their opposition to King and Empire', their paper declared that 'it would be a humiliation to them to owe their freedom to the visit of a foreign prince'.⁴⁰ In response to British and English speaking South Africans' insensitivity towards Afrikaners' history of subjection, the OB proposed a counter-celebration of the Afrikaner victory over British forces in the First Anglo-Boer War on 'Majuba Day'. Although the more extreme wartime (and post-war) views of the OB were not widely shared, many other Afrikaner critics of the tour also pointed to the culturally 'alien' aspects of the tour; they bridled at being told to enact demeaning 'foreign' gestures of subservience such as the requirement that women curtsy before the royal figures or wear white gloves in their presence.⁴¹ Likewise 'swaggering' gestures, such as the rumoured plans to present a gift of 400 uncut diamonds to Princess Elizabeth for her 21st birthday or 'extravagant trimmings' deemed necessary to decorate cities, towns and stations were lambasted in Afrikaans newspapers.⁴²

In evaluating these responses to the royal visit it is useful bearing in mind the wider Afrikaner political landscape in the 1940s. Although a strong sense of cultural nationalism had gained ground, it yet had to be translated into unified political actions. Some extra-parliamentary groups harked back to the old Boer republics; others favoured an ill-digested form of national-socialism and the abolition of the parliamentary system; and support for a republican form of government was uneven. At the core though was the National Party under Malan which asserted itself as the parliamentary home of all 'true' Afrikaners and it also made overtures to those 30% of Afrikaners or *bloedsappe* (dyed-in-the-wool South African Party (SAP) supporters) who had voted for the United Party in the 1943 election and subscribed to its white 'South Africanist' ideology. Since at

least 50% of the South African troops in the war had been Afrikaners who depended on government allowances, a good proportion of those who voted in that 'khaki election' were Afrikaners.⁴³ Without implying an exact overlap and allowing for some exceptions, the layered nature of political orientations within the overall Afrikaner camp also found expression in different emphases relating to the royal visit – from qualified acceptance from those within the broad parliamentary grouping to more forthright rejection from extra-parliamentary bodies. Different shades of political opinions were accommodated and contained within these broad parameters. More extreme positions such as mounting a full scale public boycotting campaign of the tour did not emerge, though individual nationalist politicians registered their views by absenting themselves from some events such as the ceremonial bestowal of the insignia of the Order of Merit on Smuts by the king; only 11 out of the 46 Nationalist MPs attended, and none of the Senators. Malan and the Provincial Party leaders also kept away.⁴⁴ It also has to be borne in mind that the Afrikaner politicians were somewhat at a disadvantage as far as the politics of the visit were concerned; it was after all Jan Smuts who held the whip hand and who had invited the royal family. The United Party did the running in exalted company and Afrikaner politicians could only be reactive.

Royal Overtures, Public Perceptions and Responses

The royal visit occurred at a time when there had been some concern in Afrikaner cultural circles about the viability of *volksfeeste* (nationalist political and cultural festivals). The benchmark was the 1938 Great Trek centenary festival; a spectacle marked by an unprecedented outpouring of emotion as nine ox-wagons wended their way from Cape Town to Pretoria and stopped at numerous towns and villages *en route*, allowing enthusiastic locals to experience the 'spirit' of the trek.⁴⁵ The 1938 festival, it was felt, was the last event which spoke meaningfully to an Afrikaner rural lifestyle. Since then Afrikaner urbanisation had accelerated and there was a perceived need for Afrikaners to

explore new forms of self-expression better attuned to their changed circumstances.⁴⁶ Of particular concern was the possibility that the spectacle of the royal visit might have a greater appeal to the young than formalised Afrikaner *volksfeeste*, marked by speeches, prayers and a generally sober tone. It was feared that the royal visit with its glamorous military parades, aeroplane flypasts, free cake and free lemonade (with straws for the young) had the potential to be much more alluring than the somewhat staid *volksfeeste*.⁴⁷

Whilst such apprehensions preoccupied some Afrikaner cultural entrepreneurs, responses to the royal visit were in part shaped by additional considerations. Afrikaner reactions were influenced not only by their own attitudes towards the empire, but by the way they perceived and interpreted the behaviour of the royal family towards them. The king, it seems, was well primed about the tensions in the white community and he made it a special point of interest to be seen as sensitive to such strains. Aware of the divisive role that the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 had played in South Africa, he expressed a wish to meet as many Boer veterans of that conflict as possible.⁴⁸ His request received due attention and more than a 1 000 veterans responded and gathered around the base of General Louis Botha's equestrian statue on the lawn of the Union Buildings in Pretoria. The royal visitors strolled around amongst the old soldiers and addressed several informally. General Smuts, himself a Boer veteran, also participated in proceedings and was pleased to recognise some of his erstwhile comrades, remembering them by name and even by nickname. The event was characterised by a certain bonhomie. It was as if the king's visit offered those veterans who were willing to attend, some relief and an affirmation of self-worth that they could meet the symbol of earlier British domination on an equal footing.⁴⁹ Revealingly one veteran said: 'I have long waited for this day'. However ignominious in the eyes of Afrikaner critics, others strongly expressed a desire to participate. Writing to Smuts on behalf of *Oudstryders* from the Western Transvaal, the daughter of the Anglo-Boer war hero, General De La Rey who was widely seen as a martyr requested a special *Oudstryder* meeting with the royal family in Mafeking. These men had been calling on her daily to get news of the visit from her 'English newspapers', she wrote.⁵⁰

Apart from the veterans, in Bloemfontein special arrangements were made for royal family to meet the 82 year old Mrs R.I.Steyn, widow of President M.T. Steyn, the last president of the Free State Republic.⁵¹ Although Mrs Steyn voiced reservations about whether her domestic arrangements were suitable to entertain royalty, she was impressed by the king and found him 'charming'.⁵² It was a meeting rife with symbolism as the supreme representative of the British Empire engaged with one of the last dignitaries of the former republican order. The meeting was private and no public statement was made after the event. Yet the formal photograph taken of the royal family flanking the matriarchal Mrs Steyn dressed in traditional black attire and bonnet marked the historical significance of the occasion. Another gesture was the return of President Kruger's family bible that had been purloined by a soldier during the South African War. Just before the royal tour, his widow found it, wrote to the Queen, and asked her to give to Smuts. 'So, at Groote Schuur, the home of Kruger's bitterest enemy' wrote the king's private secretary, 'it was given back to the Prime Minister of a united South Africa by Queen Victoria's great granddaughter – in law.'

In line with such conciliatory touches, the royal family also demonstrated their pleasure in Afrikaner cultural traditions. Professions of enjoyment of *braaivleis* and *jukskei*, requests for the singing of folk songs such as *Sarie Marais* and *Suikerbossie*, and speeches ending with a poorly pronounced *totsiens* (farewell) were widely reported. Smuts closely associated himself with folksy Afrikaner gatherings, most notably at the reception in the Transvaal town of Standerton, his parliamentary constituency where he assured the royals enjoyment of 'traditional' South African hospitality.⁵³

In particular the queen was singled out in certain Afrikaans circles for a 'remarkable gift of being able to attract people through her unflinching friendliness and warm interest.'⁵⁴ The fact that she was able to do so despite an exacting schedule was highly valued. In addition, the general demeanour of the royal party elicited favourable comments. 'The gracious simplicity of the King and

Queen and the Princesses', it was reported, 'and the genuine pleasure they displayed in establishing contact with all types of inhabitants of the countryside have endeared them to the people of the Free State.'⁵⁵ Even General H. Marsh, leader of the O.B. in Paarl admitted that the royal family had 'captured us completely'.⁵⁶

Although stylised royal behaviour is to be expected, it would be wrong to regard all royal appearances as stage-managed and lacking in spontaneity. At times there were incidents that went beyond the call of duty in what appears to be a genuine concern to engage with Afrikaners and their interests. As a matter of fact, in some Afrikaner circles there was a measure of surprise that although the meetings were always decorous, they were much more informal than had been anticipated.⁵⁷ One much repeated example was a visit to an ostrich farm in the Oudtshoorn district which drew an almost impromptu performance from the queen mother. She showed more than a polite interest in the ostriches and to the astonishment of the onlookers insisted on taking over the shears from one of the farmhands pruning the feathers. Promptly and deftly she proceeded to complete the task. She claimed afterwards that she was used to clipping hedges in her own garden.⁵⁸ The behaviour was affectionately remembered by the farm owner and his family years after the event.⁵⁹

Religion furthermore came into the mix. The royal family attended a service of the Dutch Reformed Church in Pretoria, the biggest Afrikaans church in the country. The minister who presided over the proceedings made much of the fact by reciting the large numbers of congregations and total numbers of adherents in the country; perhaps more than providing background for the royal visitors, the subtext conveyed the message that Afrikaners were a religious people. Going further he claimed in somewhat hyperbolic terms that 'in worshipping with us here on this memorable occasion Your Majesties are in spirit with all God's children in the land, for whatever denominational, racial, political or language barriers may divide us, those who serve the same Master are one in Christ.'⁶⁰ The king must have had reservations about such instantaneous miracles, but it was certainly a reassuring message.

On a symbolic level the king also sought to give recognition to what was considered 'sacred' Afrikaner history at the time. In Bloemfontein in particular, he deferred to Afrikaner historical sentiments. 'Here you live', he said, 'on land carved from the wilderness, and held for you by God-fearing forefathers, the Voortrekkers. These smiling plains and fertile farmlands, this fine city of Bloemfontein and other towns of your province are indeed a heritage of which you may well be proud.'⁶¹

While the royal party did their best to demonstrate their goodwill, there was a general consensus amongst Afrikaners that their good name should not be besmirched by undignified and discourteous behaviour. It became a recurring theme that Afrikaners were a 'civilized' people with excellent manners. Despite their republican sentiments, the position of the king would be respected. Loutish behaviour would not be tolerated.⁶² This sense of occasion was made explicit by the mayor of Pretoria, D.P. van Heerden. Although Van Heerden was interned during the war on account of alleged pro-German sentiments, he preferred to shelve the experience. 'South Africans are noted for their hospitality', he said, 'and I am not going to let anyone down with the royal visit to our city. Although I am an ex-internee, I shall go out of my way to prove to Their Majesties that we Afrikaans-speaking South Africans know how to treat our guests.'⁶³

Outwardly decorum was well maintained, but this did not entail acceptance. There was a sense in which some Afrikaners felt trapped by their own civility; because they were considered a courteous people they had to act the part though they understood well the underlying intentions of the visit.⁶⁴ Others again, argued that as a *quid pro quo* for Afrikaner good behaviour white English-speaking South Africans should show greater sensitivity towards Afrikaner cultural values.⁶⁵

Popular Responses

The English language press predicted upon the arrival of the royal family that as the tour will proceed, 'in *dorp* and town, through wayside halts and lonely sidings and in cities there will be renewed and spontaneous risings to pay tribute to them'.⁶⁶ On the face of it, the prediction seemed

to be accurate. Colin Steyn, the minister in attendance with the royal family in the Free State and a son of former republican president M.T. Steyn, expressed surprise that 'back-veldt farmers' drove miles to see the royals at 'some wayside station at which the train probably stops for a few minutes'.⁶⁷ In the cities thousands lined the streets. 'Cares, problems, difficulties and anxieties', it was claimed in a Johannesburg newspaper, 'were all forgotten for one memorable day; and rich and poor, privileged, old and young united in loyalty, enthusiasm and happiness as they joined together to greet their King and Queen'.⁶⁸ In Bloemfontein, despite conflicting reports by the English and Afrikaans newspapers on the level of support, it appears that the visit was deemed too extraordinary an occurrence for Afrikaners to dismiss out of hand.⁶⁹ Likewise in Pretoria, another Afrikaner stronghold, thousands thronged the route to be followed by the royal party. Significantly, the Afrikaans press reported that the 'applause was politely friendly without being enthusiastic'.⁷⁰

The caveat is important. It appears that although Afrikaners came out in force to witness the public spectacle, this did not signal deep commitment or warm identification. At the heart of the interest was another human trait. In his spat with H.F. Verwoerd on his newspaper's failure to report on the royal visit, J.G. Strydom made this clear when he impressed upon Verwoerd that 'our people are curious and in their thousands they flock to the cities, towns and railway sidings to witness such "oddities" as Kings and Queens'.⁷¹ The nationalist press too acknowledged the attractions, however ephemeral, of the processions and pomp, noting 'that as far as the [Afrikaner] masses are concerned, they were curious. Many of them might have waved flags and applauded, but then it was finished'.⁷² As *Die Kruithoring* concluded, in the absence of a prior commitment to Empire, it was too much to expect a single visit to cement the ties and displace the rising tide of 'new Afrikaner patriotism'.⁷³ It was further argued that for many the visit was something of an anti-climax; the king, somewhat ironically given the fact that the party deliberately tried to maintain a common touch, appeared to some as too ordinary.⁷⁴ Whilst the royal party might not have appeared sufficiently grand and glamorous, the 'White Train', especially in the countryside, attracted a great deal of attraction where it was a rare spectacle indeed. But even this was literally of passing interest. Once

the train had departed some youngsters who were enthralled by the feat of modern technology, had to explain to their less impressionable nationalist elders why they had gone to look at the spectacle in the first place.⁷⁵

In evaluating general Afrikaner responses it is clear that political persuasion and conviction did not necessarily act as a deterrent in coming to terms with the royal visit. This point was well made during the visit to Stellenbosch where the local university was generally considered to be nationalist in its sentiments. When a post-graduate student was quizzed by a reporter on his views, he replied with a smile: 'Well I hear that at Oxford there is still quite a considerable Jacobite association as well as a Communist Party, and perhaps an Anarchist club, but I imagine the Royal Family could visit that university without any fears for their dignity or safety.'⁷⁶ To an extent, Afrikaner reactions can be made sense of by conceiving the royal visit as providing a liminal space, a brief suspension of reality and belief before matters return to normal and the quotidian. Whether it was the breath-taking sight of the White Train speeding through the countryside, the visual and aural spectacle in city streets that caused traffic to be diverted and public holidays declared, the tour indeed disrupted the routines and rhythms of day to day existence. Many Afrikaners, despite their curiosity, saw it as a purely symbolic spectacle of Empire with little practical consequences. It was argued that the old Roman emperors were better at these kinds of spectacles: 'they gave the masses circuses *and bread*.'⁷⁷ It is also worth considering the responses of the royal party and the British press to their encounters with Afrikaners. Like the South African English-language newspapers, the British press emphasised the warmth and 'normality' of the royal family in winning over the most hardened nationalists and republicans. But it is unlikely that this was purely strategic or gestural. Private letters suggest that there was some genuine pleasure (and relief) in the royal party's meetings with Afrikaners. The Queen described the widow of the last president of the Free State as a 'wonderful old lady', and she wrote of a 'most delightful reception – very nice country people' in Stellenbosch.⁷⁸ The author of the official account of the visit, Dermot Morrah suggested that there existed a special affinity between rural Afrikaner folk and the Scottish Queen that arose from shared

cultural and religious traditions, and a common history which the Queen herself acknowledged; in response to an Afrikaner who admitted that he could never quite forgive the British for having conquered his country, she replied, (referring no doubt to the 'English'), 'We feel very much the same in Scotland'.⁷⁹ Following a long line of British visitors from Anthony Trollope and xxxx Froude, the king's private secretary, Alan Lascelles wrote to his wife that he preferred 'the simple Free Staters of Bloemfontein and its neighbourhood' to the brash parvenu of Johannesburg. The former 'were as different from the Jo'burgers as a West Country yeoman is from a Birmingham stockbroker', he observed.⁸⁰ In similar vein, the Captain of *HMS Vanguard* and his officers recorded surprised that 'anti-British' men were so friendly and lavish in their hospitality.⁸¹ Even Geoffrey Bridson, the BBC journalist who was otherwise critical of 'the Afrikaner's ... refusal to move into the twentieth century', admired the pioneer achievements of the nineteenth century *Voortrekkers* which he wrote up in a 'verse feature' - *The Great Trek* – and produced in the studios of the South African Broadcasting Corporation during the tour.⁸² Whether or not some such pronouncements on Afrikaners were concocted for diplomatic purposes, an intuitive sympathy for what was perceived as the conservative and 'traditional' rural Afrikaner lifestyle emerges in the accounts of the visitors, one that went along with distaste for the thrusting modernity of the great cities and unease at the enormity of 'the colour problem'.⁸³

Ramifications

Smuts had hoped for the royal visit to have a beneficial unifying effect on the country. He regarded the king as 'above politics' and in a country where 'politics run to too high', the king could act as a 'reconciler and peacemaker'.⁸⁴ This became an enduring theme during the tour. Shortly after the arrival of the royal family, Smuts claimed that 'the effect of the King's visit is already evident throughout the country and already there is more gentleness, more unity apparent'.⁸⁵ Towards the

end of the visit Smuts, not surprisingly, concluded that the tour was a resounding success. In almost metaphysical terms he thanked the queen: 'Something of your gracious personality has gone out to us and entered into the spirit of South Africa. It has been and will remain an abiding presence with us – a healing influence among the differences which distract our society.'⁸⁶ Going further in his letter to the King, Smuts suggested that the royal family's flesh and blood presence in their country made South Africans understand the 'inner meaning of our constitutional position' and had made the monarchy 'a living human reality'.⁸⁷

Commenting on the royal visit, Smuts' biographer correctly observed that the premier's perspective was 'innocent' and that it turned out to be a 'wishful dream'⁸⁸. Smuts already advanced in years during the visit, might well after a life full of strife which included three major wars, have felt a yearning for a gentler more humane world. Perhaps this fed into his optimistic but unrealistic hopes for the royal visit which offered a balm after the bruising he had faced in the UN the previous year. In real political terms, however, he committed the error of mistaking shadow for substance; the enthusiasm of the crowds did not necessarily mean a change in wider outlook. Very few if any Afrikaners would have altered their worldviews on the strength of seeing the royal family; and the loyalists would have been loyal anyway, with or without the tour. Indeed, as Paul Sauer, chief whip of the National Party summed it up: 'the royal family has been received by many Afrikaners with the hospitality characteristic of their rural life but it has made no difference to their opinions.'⁸⁹

If Smuts had hoped that in party political terms, as the nationalists often averred, the United Party with a general election on the horizon would stand to benefit from the sentiments generated by the tour, it is an assumption which is difficult to prove. Smuts' deputy, Jan Hofmeyr doubted that 'the political affect will be very great but we never expected it would be'.⁹⁰ As a matter of fact it is easier to demonstrate that the tour had the opposite effect. In January 1947 in a by-election in the western Cape constituency of Hottentots-Holland the United Party lost what was considered a safe seat by 600 votes.⁹¹ The unexpected defeat set the alarm bells off in the United Party camp.

‘Politically we have been on a bad patch since the resounding defeat at Hottentots-Holland’, A.O. Oosthuisen, United Party secretary wrote in his diary in March 1947. A special report on this was prepared for the cabinet, but Smuts ignored the recommendations. All round, Oosthuisen noted, there were ‘many aches about the Oubaas’ [Smuts’] refusal to act on all sorts of matters. The reason for this, Oosthuisen thought, was because the royal visit ‘absorbed much of his time, thoughts and energy’.⁹² Ironically then, Smuts’ preoccupation with the tour seemed to have had a negative impact as far as politics on the ground were concerned. This was also a harbinger of things to come; in part at least the watershed 1948 general election victory by the National Party can amongst other reasons be ascribed to the lackadaisical organisation of the United Party.⁹³ The Prime Minister’s ubiquity during the tour had exasperated Hofmeyr, who felt that Smuts had erred in being so ‘openly royalist’.⁹⁴

Turning from the vagaries of electioneering politics, it is worth considering whether the visit forged stronger links between the two countries. In the United Party press it was argued that in the uncertainty of the post-war world, South Africa would have to nurture its international contacts and networks and that the king’s visit would go a significant distance in raising the country’s profile.⁹⁵ South Africa should count itself fortunate it was said, to be the first Commonwealth country to be honoured by a royal visit after the war. This was the case because of Smuts’ stature and friendship with the royals.

In another ironic twist, however, it was none other than Malan who was to exploit the Commonwealth linkage after his party had taken power in 1948 with him as premier. Like Smuts, Malan also acted as Minister of External Affairs and he had a special interest in maintaining connections abroad particularly after criticism against apartheid started building up in the West.⁹⁶ In 1952 Malan even offered the prime ministerial holiday home, Botha House, on Natal’s south coast as a suitable place for recuperation after the king’s health declined precipitously.⁹⁷ It is tempting to see this in part at least as an outcome of the tentative and even slightly reluctant contact Malan had

established with the King in 1947 when he had spoken alone with the King for about half an hour on the last day of the visit.⁹⁸ Once ensconced in power in 1952, Malan could afford to extend greater largesse with a view to possible positive spin-offs, though he was careful, in the planning of the king's recuperative visit, to ensure that the royal family were kept well away from Cape Town for the start of the Van Riebeeck Tercentenary celebrations, or, as Leslie Witz has dubbed it, 'apartheid's festival'.⁹⁹

Malan's apparent *volte face* was characteristic of his pragmatism. Domestically, he was reluctant once in power to force the divisive issue of republicanism and antagonise English speakers. His attempts to include English speakers within a broader white South African cultural nationalism was epitomised by the inclusion of an English speaker in the 1949 Voortrekker Monument pageantry.¹⁰⁰ In the international arena, he perceived the advantages of Commonwealth membership in the face of growing international and UN hostility to his government's *apartheid* policies. He acknowledged the 'uniquely friendly relations existing between our country and the United Kingdom and other members of the British Commonwealth of Nations' and shortly after coming to power, attended the 1949 Commonwealth Conference at which he referred to the organisation as 'an inner circle with whom we have special ties.' A key reason for this stance was the landmark decision of 1949 whereby a country could retain its membership of the Commonwealth after declaring itself a republic and severing its constitutional links with the British crown, a precedent set by newly independent India which had opted for republican status.¹⁰¹ In turn, Anglo-South African diplomatic, defence and economic ties remained close.

Whether there were direct economic results from the Royal Tour, it is difficult to assess, but certainly, there were expectations that amongst the tour's 'deeper purposes' was the resolution to Britain's economic woes. As a commentator on a *Pathe* newsreel intoned, the tour would play a 'vital part' in 'contributing to that economic prosperity on which the standard of living of all of us ultimately depends'.¹⁰² The tour also presented an unprecedented opportunity for South Africa to

convey a picture of a buoyant economy and a sunlit land of abundance that contrasted with a Britain crippled by privations and mired in the worst winter in living memory. These images no doubt helped fuel a wave of post-war British immigration to Southern Africa – though it was Southern Rhodesia rather than South Africa that received the lion’s share of new migrants. Another instance of the ongoing economic interdependence of the two states was exemplified during the tour by the loading onto *HMS Vanguard* of 15 million pounds worth of gold and a symbol of the gold loan from South Africa to Britain that was later brokered.¹⁰³ How far the extensive advertising of clothing, fashion and other royal-tour themed commodities served as fillip to local commerce has yet to be established but it is likely to have served as an invigorating shot in the arm.

If Malan felt able to invite the king to recuperate in South Africa in 1952, some hostile reactions in the United Kingdom towards the acceptance of this invitation was an augur of future contention in Britain’s relations with apartheid South Africa. With the newly radicalised ANC poised to launch their mass defiance campaign against apartheid legislation, the early presence in London of anti-apartheid South African students and activists who made common cause with anti-colonial, left wing and Pan-Africanist organisations meant that this proposed royal visit, however informal and private, was strongly opposed. The League of Coloured People objected to it on the grounds of South Africa’s ‘recent behaviour in international affairs’ and the National Party’s attitude towards the King’s ‘coloured subjects’.¹⁰⁴ The Labour MP, Fenner Brockway pointed out that his advisors had been mistaken in making the arrangements for him to stay at the home of a man ‘regarded by millions of Africans and Indians in the Commonwealth as the embodiment of the policy of white racial domination’.¹⁰⁵ Six Labour MPs tabled a motion in the House of Commons calling on the King to consider the ‘distress caused to many of His Majesty’s subjects by the decision that His Majesty is to be the guest of Dr Malan in his official residence.’¹⁰⁶ While the King’s death brought an end to this controversy, it revealed both Malan’s willingness to engage in *realpolitik* as well as the shift in attitudes within sections of British society - if not the government - that would culminate in the formation of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement.¹⁰⁷

Conclusions

Unexpected developments played out both in the realms of diplomatic relationships and in the internecine struggles of intra-Afrikaner politics. The 1947 visit had repercussions for Afrikaners who supported the United Party and who were publically associated with the royal tour. Thus C.J. Meyer, the Oudtshoorn ostrich farmer who entertained the royal family found that after 1948 members of the local Broederbond (the secret Afrikaner organisation) were inclined to complicate matters for him and his family at the local co-operative.¹⁰⁸

Ironically, whilst the OB had so vociferously opposed the tour, it seized on the idea that the royal visit might promote white unity. Lamenting not only divisions within Afrikaner ranks, the OB, perhaps because it recognised that it was a spent force, issued a call mid-way through the tour for English and Afrikaner unity in a 'White South Africa' in the to counter threats posed by resurgent Asian and African nationalism in South Africa and the wider world.¹⁰⁹ This view was not restricted to the OB; it was reported that some republicans hoped the visit would foster 'a better understanding between the two sections of the white race in South Africa'¹¹⁰ and one newspaper speculated that there existed some 'sneaking' nationalist support for Smuts' 'courage and sagacity' in his defence of South Africa at the UN and a recognition that his international prestige represented a 'golden asset'.¹¹¹ The appeal for white unity was possibly also been prompted by unease occasioned by massive racially-mixed crowds that converged in the city streets to greet the Royal Family. The OB press was joined by mainstream newspapers in expressing disquiet about black and white jostling against one another that was surely linked to anxieties about *oorstroming* (swamping) of the urban areas by black immigrants who had moved into the cities in unprecedented numbers during the war years.¹¹² If racial anxieties surfaced during the royal visit, it is also noteworthy that the king's widely reported Guildhall Speech on his return to the United Kingdom in May that year in which he indicated that the domestic problems of South Africa should be left to South Africans to address

themselves was welcomed by Afrikaners. As Evelyn Baring put it, it was seen as ‘Britain clearly telling the world: hands off, South Africa must and can solve her own colour problems’.¹¹³

Local politicians’ responses to the tour frequently were shaped by purposes other than national or official perspectives. Civic rivalry over municipal celebrations and the associated prestige of individual cities was one factor. The reputations of local dignitaries could be enhanced by organising the events or appearing alongside the royal visitors. The nationalist mayor of Bloemfontein, J.G. Bernade was credited for securing cooperation between ‘full-blooded Nationalists and pukka Englishmen’ on his committee during the royal visit and for his honourable and dignified bearing.¹¹⁴ Studied performances of courtesy and hospitality by Afrikaner officials and politicians in themselves represented a form of diplomatic currency, and offered a dignified riposte to the enthusiasms of the English language press and many English-speaking compatriots. Behaving with courtesy, politeness and consideration, moreover, could be claimed as being ‘true to our heritage as Afrikaners’.¹¹⁵ Indeed, assertions of cultural pride were not incompatible with deference towards the royal family and their Prime Minister; the folk dancers and *boere-orke* member who welcomed the royal party at Standerton no doubt took pleasure in displaying Afrikaner dance, music and culinary tradition even if they declined to vote for their MP, Jan Smuts, in the election of 1948.

A main characteristic of the tour was that it generated unintended outcomes from the layered Afrikaner responses to its negative impact on United Party organisational machinery. Idiosyncratic and opposed responses were a feature of Afrikaner, as they were African, Coloured, Indian and white English-speakers’ engagement with the tour. Members of a single family might respond differently to one another – often, though not exclusively, on gendered and generational lines. Whereas the young F.W. De Klerk and his father burnished their nationalist and republican credentials by refusing to participate in any aspect of the royal tour, for example, the future president’s mother ‘was determined to see the King and Queen and Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret when they came to Krugersdorp’ and had ‘a pretty hat and a red dress made especially for

the occasion'.¹¹⁶ Similarly, having stayed away from Cape Town during the arrival of *HMS Vanguard* in Cape Town, the young journalist (and future novelist) Elsa Joubert responded with alacrity to the invitation from her uncle, the Administrator of the Orange Free State, to attend the royal ball in Bloemfontein, and to serve as companions to the princesses on a brief visit to the game reserve near the city.¹¹⁷ It is notable, however, that she was underwhelmed by her companions. As a public spectacle the tour was the last of its kind for quite a while; British pomp and circumstance on this scale were not seen again during the 46 years of National Party rule as South Africa drifted further away from Britain after the country became a republic and decided to leave the Commonwealth in 1961. Yet, ironically the allure of royalty did not vanish completely and an intense fascination with the royal family survived even among those Afrikaners hostile to Britain as it has among republicans in Australia. With the 1986 royal wedding of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson, it was reported that the enthusiasm of some Afrikaners for the event, despite the interlude of 25 years of republicanism, could be traced to the interest shown in 1947 tour. It was an interest that was rekindled when the Queen returned in 1995 to welcome a newly democratic South Africa back into the Commonwealth. The reconciliation effected by South Africans at the close of the century, it appeared, had evidently not required the healing and reconciliatory powers attributed to the British crown during her visit as a young princess in 1947.¹¹⁸ Indeed, as others have argued, it was the crown which had more to gain in welcoming and 'assiduously courting' the newly proclaimed President Mandela of South Africa to London in 1996.¹¹⁹

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³ Aside from royal biographies, aspects of the tour have been addressed in Aronson, *Royal Ambassadors*; Douglas-Home, *Evelyn Baring*; Morrah, *Royal Family*; Haasbroek, 'Die Britse Koningsbesoek'; Hyam and Henshaw, *Lion and the Springbok*; Sapire, 'African Loyalism'; Connelly, 'HMS Vanguard'; Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*; Lambert, "'Welcome Home'".

⁴ Rhodes-James, *Spirit Undaunted*, 296; Pimlott, *Queen*, 119; Adamson, *Last Empire*, 111.

⁵ Douglas-Home, *Evelyn Baring*, 151.

⁶ 'Dominions and King' by Sir Shuldham Redfern, *The Spectator*, 18 April, 1946.

⁷ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*; Ranger, 'Making Northern Rhodesia Imperial'; C. Kaul, 'Monarchical Display, 473.

⁸ 'Racialism a Passing Phase. Lord Buxton on Royal Tour', *Natal Mercury*, 23 May, 1925; Lambert, 'A United South Africa', 128 – 152.

⁹ Frew, *Prince George's African Tour*, 2-3. It was precisely the effects of devolution in conferring upon the Dominions equality of status with Britain that enhanced the symbolic power of the crown as a binding force in the Empire. Satisfied with the new constitutional arrangements, the nationalist Prime Minister, J.B.M. Hertzog who played so prominent a role in redefining dominion status was at ease in welcoming both Prince Edward and Prince George to South Africa in the interwar years. The tensions and discontents that came to the surface during the former tour are more fully explored in a forthcoming article by Hilary Sapire.

¹⁰ Sapire, 'African Loyalism'.

¹¹ Garson, 'Smuts, the South African National War Museum'; Dubow, *Apartheid*, 1-2.

¹² Dubow, 'Scientism, Social Research'; Lambert, 'South African British?'; Sandon, *African Mirror*; Foster, *Washed with Sun*, 239; Cardo, 'Fighting a Worse Imperialism'.

¹³ Morrah, 'Monarchy in the Commonwealth', 499.

¹⁴ Ziegler, *George VI*, 72 – 73.

¹⁵ Wheeler-Bennett, *George VI*, 685.

¹⁶ Williamson, 'Monarchy', 245.

¹⁷ Hyam and Henshaw, *Lion and Springbok*, 278.

¹⁸ The National Archive Kew (TNA) Foreign Office (FO) 371/65575 High Commissioner to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, received 23 May, 1947.

¹⁹ National Archive Pretoria (NA): Governor General (GG) 222 78/253 Acting Secretary to the Prime Minister and for External Affairs to the Office of the Prime Minister and Department of External Affairs, 29 May, 1946

²⁰ 'South Africa: The Royal Visit', *The Round Table*, 37, 147, 1947, 297-302; E. Brookes 'Reflections on the Royal Visit', *African World*, June, 1947, 17.

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- ²¹ Bradford, *Elizabeth*, 18; Bradford, *George VI*, 516-517; Pimlott, *The Queen*, 111; Rhodes James, *Spirit Undaunted*, 294 – 296.
- ²² 'The Queen in South Africa' (BBC, 1995).
- ²³ Welsh, *Rise and Fall*, 24- 25; Witz, *Apartheid's Festival*, 94.
- ²⁴ Dubow and Jeeves, *South Africa in the 1940s*.
- ²⁵ Lowry, 'Crown, Empire Loyalty and the Assimilation of Non-British White Subjects'.
- ²⁶ 'South African Letter. Royal Visits', *Times of India* 28, June, 1925; 'South African Parties. The Malanite Creed', *Times*, 8 December, 1934.
- ²⁷ *Debatte van die Volksraad*, 21 March 1946, para 4085 (Translated).
- ²⁸ *Debatte van die Volksraad*, 21 March 1946, para 4118 (Translated).
- ²⁹ 'Royal Family Leaving London Today', *Times*, 31 January, 1947.
- ³⁰ Institute for Contemporary History, University of the Free State, National Party Collection, 1/1/2280, Botha to Malan, 3 March 1947.
- ³¹ University of South Africa, United Party Archives, 17.12, Reports by Captain G.H. Ribbink, 21 February 1947.
- ³² 'Present and Absence', *Pretoria News*, 11 March 1947.
- ³³ Institute of Contemporary History, PV 93, H.F. Verwoerd Collection, 1/56/1 Strijdom to Verwoerd, 1 March 1947 and Verwoerd to Strijdom, 4 March 1947. See also Prinsloo, 'H.F. Verwoerd se Vriendskap', 230-239. Although *Die Transvaler* did not cover the events of the tour itself, some critical articles were covered in the preceding month, lambasting, for example the expectation that Afrikaner boys should serve in the royal guard of honour, the government's evasiveness about the cost of the tour, and British ignorance and stereotyped conceptions of Afrikaners: eg. 'Nie Sodanig Subtiel Nie', *Transvaler*, 30 January, 1947.
- ³⁴ Royal Archive (RA) PS/PSO/GV1/PS /VISCOM/08100/68/06 'Press Reactions'.
- ³⁵ RA PS/PSO/GV1/PS/VISCOM/08100/68/04 High Commissioner, Cape Town to Secretary of State for the Dominions, 10 March, 1947.
- ³⁶ 'Nationalist Reaction to Royal Visit in Orange Free State', *The Friend*, 17 March, 1947; Mervis, *Fourth Estate*, 273.
- ³⁷ *Debatte van die Volksraad*, 17 March, 1947, para 1226-1227 (Translated).
- ³⁸ Quoted in Smuts, *Jan Christiaan Smuts*, 501.
- ³⁹ Stellenbosch University, D.F. Malan Collection, ---- *Die Koning! Is Hy Welkom?*, 2,6 24; E. Roux, 'The King and the OB', *Trek*, xi, 14,10 January, 1947.
- ⁴⁰ 'South Africa Endorses General Smuts' Policy', *The Friend*, , 27 January, 1947.
- ⁴¹ 'Die Koningsbesoek', *Die Volksblad*, 13 January 1947.
- ⁴² 'South Africa Endorses General Smuts' Policy', *The Friend*, 27 January, 1947.
- ⁴³ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 445; Koorts, *D.F. Malan*, 373; Grundlingh, 'King's Afrikaners'.
- ⁴⁴ TNA: Dominion Office (DO) 119/1429 Baring to Addison, 19 February, 1947.
- ⁴⁵ Grundlingh and Sapire, 'Feverish Festival'.
- ⁴⁶ Coetzee, *Die Afrikaner*, 38.

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- ⁴⁸ 'The King to Meet Oudstryders', *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 March, 1947.
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- ⁵⁰ 'The King Chats to Oud-stryders', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 March 1947; NA:MEM PS 2322/46 'Polly' to Smuts, 25 March, 1947.
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- ⁵² Truter, *Tibbie: Rachel Isabella Steyn*, 242. (Translated).
- ⁵³ "'Suikerbossie" was Choice of the King', *Pretoria News*, 2 April, 1947; 'Pretoria's Crowded Week', *Pretoria News*, 8 April, 1947; 'Koningsgesin Waardeer Afrikaans', *Suiderstem*, 28 April, 1947; 'Vorstege sin se Belangstelling in Afrikaanse Volksliedere', *Suiderstem*, 25 April 1947 ; NA: (Buitelandse Sake) BTS 24 81 22/2/14/29 Secretary Administrators' Committee for the Royal Visit to Secretary to the Prime Minister, 23 September, 1946.
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- ⁵⁵ 'Royal welcome in the Free State', *The Times*, 17 March, 1947.
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- ⁵⁷ 'Die Koningsbesoek', *Die Huisgenoot*, 23 May 1947.
- ⁵⁸ 'Die Koningsbesoek', *Die Huisgenoot*, 23 May, 1947; 'Koninklike Egpaar Knip Vere', *Die Vaderland*, 25 February 1947.
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- ⁷⁸ Shawcross, *Queen Elizabeth*, 614-615.
- ⁷⁹ Longford, *Queen Mother*.
- ⁸⁰ A. Lascelles to J. Lascelles in Hart Davis, *King's Counsellor*, 403
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- ⁸² Bridson, *Prospero and Ariel*, chapter 6.
- ⁸³ University of Durham Library: Baring Papers, GRE 1/9/1 Private Secretary to the King to High Commissioner, 27 February, 1947. Lascelles was also struck by the extent of anti-semitism he came across in South Africa.
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- ⁸⁵ 'More Gentleness Through Royal Visit, Says Smuts', *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 April 1947.
- ⁸⁶ 'General Smuts Praises Queen's Part in South African Tour', *Pretoria News*, 22 April, 1947.
- ⁸⁷ RA PSO/GVI/PS/VISCOM/08100/68/65A Smuts to King George VI, 1 June, 1947.
- ⁸⁸ Hancock, *Smuts*, II, 495.
- ⁸⁹ 'Africans Analyse Visit by Royalty', *New York Times*, 28 April, 1947.
- ⁹⁰ University of the Witwatersrand (UW) J. H. Hofmeyr papers, Historical Manuscripts, Hofmeyr to Underhill, 14 May, 1947. N.L. Waddy argues that the British government was equally complacent: 'The Fork in the Road', 80 – 81.
- ⁹¹ Meiring, *Jan Smuts*, 183.
- ⁹² University of South Africa, United Party Archives, O.A Oosthuisen diary, 9 March 1947.
- ⁹³ Grundlingh, 'Interwar Years'.
- ⁹⁴ Paton, *Hofmeyr*, 451.
- ⁹⁵ 'Die Koning se Dank', *Suiderstem*, 18 February, 1947; 'n Gulde Geleentheid', *Die Suiderstem*, 21 February 1947.
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- ⁹⁸ RA PS/GVI/PS 08100/68/09, Baring to Addison, 16 May, 1947.
- ⁹⁹ Cape Archive Depot, (CAD), A.L. Geyer Collection, A 1890, Malan to Geyer, 13 November 1951. Our thanks to Lindie Koorts for sharing her research with us.
- ¹⁰⁰ Witz, *Apartheid's Festival*, .97.

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¹⁰⁴ 'The King's Visit to Natal', *Times*, 11 January, 1952.

¹⁰⁵ 'Royal Visit to Natal. Mr Fenner Brockway's Criticism', *Times*, 9 January 1952.

¹⁰⁶ 'King's Visit to South Africa', *Times*, 1 February, 1952.

¹⁰⁷ Gurney, "'A Great Cause'"; Lissoni, 'The South African Liberation Movements', chapter 1.

¹⁰⁸ R. Meyer (grandson of CJ Meyer) email to A.Grundlingh, 18 February, 2015.

¹⁰⁹ 'Nationalists and Ossewa Brandwag. Dr Van Rensburg Urges Unity', *The Friend*, 24 March, 1947.

¹¹⁰ RA/PS/PSO/GVI/PS/VISCOM/08100/68/06, 'Press Reactions'.

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¹¹³ TNA: DO 119/1431 Baring to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 21 May, 1947.

¹¹⁴ 'Nationalists and the King', *The Times Weekly Newspaper for Uitenhage and the Eastern Province Districts*, 19 March, 1947.

¹¹⁵ 'Ex Internee Pretoria will be Mayoral Host', *Sunday Times* 15 December, 1946.

¹¹⁶ De Klerk, *Die Laaste Trek*, p 42.

¹¹⁷ Joubert, *Wonderlike Geweld*, 382. Thanks to Elsabe Brink for this reference.

¹¹⁸ 'Respite for South Africa: A Royal Wedding', *New York Times*, 23 July 1986.

¹¹⁹ 'Mandela Ends Triumphant Visit to Britain', *New York Times*, 13 July, 1996.