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GENERAL SMUTS

AND

SOUTH AFRICAN DIPLOMACY

by

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Address to a meeting of the Witwatersrand Branch of the S.A. Institute of International Affairs on 16th September, 1970, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Jan Christiaan Smuts. Originally given as the third annual C.R. Swart Lecture at the University of the Orange Free State on 14th August, 1970.

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It was a great honour to have been invited to give the C.R. Swart Lecture at the University of the Orange Free State, and a great privilege, in this centennial year of the birth of Jan Christiaan Smuts, now to address you in his memory. For one who knew him in the years of his greatest achievement, from 1939 to 1948, and who has held the Jan Smuts Chair of International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand from 1961 to 1970, it is a major responsibility.

In an hour it would be impossible even to outline his contribution to the development of South African Foreign Policy and to the organisation of the South African Foreign Service, and, to omit in this connection his contribution to the development of the British Commonwealth of Nations, to the League of Nations and to the United Nations, would be to rewrite Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. Like Winston Churchill he also played a major role in World War I and was Prime Minister of his country during World War II, and, although we are apt to forget it, foreign policy is even more important in war than in peace. The commitments of the Hitler-Stalin pact were so explicit that they brought about, within a month, the collapse of Poland, and, within a year, that of France, while the imprecision of the Axis Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan caused Hitler to commit Germany to wars in support of both his allies while Mussolini kept Italy neutral until the defeat of France was certain, and Japan's decision not to attack Russia enabled Stalin to use his Siberian army to save Moscow from the Germans.

Since I have to be selective, I propose to limit myself to three aspects of General Smuts policy, but to emphasise in each its particular relevance to South Africa. They have the advantage of constituting a rough chronological sequence, they are inevitably inter-related, and they are the three of which I had personal knowledge. The first is the relationship of South Africa to the British Commonwealth of Nations, the second the part played by Smuts in the drafting of the Covenant of the League and the Charter of the United Nations, and the third the role of South Africa within Southern Africa. All three have shaped the present as much as they dominated the past.

Nine years of a Republic have already made it difficult for us to realise today how important the British Commonwealth was to South Africa during the half century after the creation of the Union. For fifty years South Africa's most important links with the outside world were with and through the Commonwealth, which during that period was twice transformed. The first change was from the British Empire, which was basically a colonial empire, into the British Commonwealth of Nations, in which each was responsible for its own policy but within which each had agreed to consult the others and if possible co-ordinate its foreign policy with theirs. The member nations were all of European origin: the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Irish Free State, and, for a brief period, Newfoundland. The remainder of the old empire was still attached to the United Kingdom. This Commonwealth was wholly approved by Smuts, who played a major part in its creation, and was the cornerstone of his foreign policy. The second change was from this British Commonwealth into a much looser Commonwealth of many more nations, in which mutual consultation was of much less importance, mutual co-operation was often as impossible as at the United Nations, and the Commonwealth was, if I may use the words which Lord Bryce used of the 'Holy Roman Empire', the "ghost of the Empire sitting crowned on its own grave." This second change was made against the strong opposition of Smuts, who feared and distrusted the new creation.

The British Commonwealth, of the period from 1919 to 1949, was already implicit in that combination of self-government and federation which fear of annexation by the victorious northern states of the Union had, in the two years after the end of the American Civil War in 1865, led both the Governments of the Canadian

colonies and the British Government to agree upon for the organisation of British North America. Implicit because, if the new Dominion of Canada was to prove strong enough to stand up to the United States, it had inevitably to demand the right to decide and to carry out its own foreign policy vis a vis the United States, while continuing to safeguard its own security by maintaining its close relationship with the United Kingdom. When the Commonwealth of Australia was created in 1900, and the Union of South Africa in 1909, it was obvious that Canada, Australia, South Africa and the older union of the New Zealand colonies would exert strong pressure upon the United Kingdom to recognise the ultimate responsibility of their Parliaments within their boundaries, and of their Governments for policy whether internal or external. There was, in practice, only that force of inertia which remains in all obsolete institutions to resist the process of change, and such delay as did occur, after 1909, was due more to the outbreak of World War I than to any other cause. The process of peacemaking at its conclusion, gave recognition to the new Commonwealth even if some six years of discussion were to be necessary before the implications could be spelt out in the agreed recommendations of the Imperial Conference of 1926, subsequently given effect in the British Statute of Westminster and the corresponding legislation of the Dominion parliaments.

It has been said that General Smuts was the originator of the Commonwealth and General Hertzog the author of the recommendations of the 1926 Conference. Neither claim will stand up to examination. The idea of a Commonwealth of equal states, united in loyalty to the Crown, had been worked out during the last critical year or two of the dispute between Great Britain and the thirteen American colonies, which preceded the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It was then proposed that there should be a group of British nations, united by loyalty to King George III, who would be King, not only of Great Britain but of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Dominion of Virginia and the rest, and their legislatures would have equal rights with the British Parliament. Slow communications by sea - it took two to three months to cross the North Atlantic - would however make it inevitable that the British Government would act on behalf of all in connection with foreign policy and defence. It is tempting to think that Smuts came across the idea when writing his early and unpublished book on the American poet, Walt Whitman, but, in an admittedly hasty re-reading of Whitman's collected verse, and of a volume of selections from his newspaper articles and letters, I have been unable to find a single reference even to the word "Commonwealth". If a literary source must be found, the volumes of the "American Commonwealth", written by Lord Bryce, a former British Ambassador to the United States, and first published in 1888, are more probable. A meeting between Smuts and Bryce was urged in 1917 by F.X. Merriman, and planned as soon as Smuts reached London. The structure of the British Empire was in any event being subjected before, during and after World War I, to constant examination and discussion in London by the group of officials which met in the Imperial Defence Committee and subsequently in the Cabinet Secretariat which grew from that Committee, a group which included Leopold Amery and Maurice Hankey. Lionel Curtis and others were publicising similar ideas in "The Round Table". Lord Milner and Arthur Balfour, a former Conservative M.P., and subsequently the draftsman of the declaration of the 1926 Conference, in turn amended and made more precise the concepts to which the others were moving. Philip Kerr, later Lord Lothian and World War II Ambassador to the United States, was personal assistant to Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, and converted the latter. Smuts was in constant touch with Milner and Balfour at the meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet during the years 1917 to 1919, with Hankey and Amery, with whom he had an active correspondence, at the Cabinet Secretariat, and with Kerr at No. 10 Downing Street. At the Imperial War Conference of 1917 he met Sir Robert Borden, the Prime Minister of Canada, who, he found, shared his

views and W. M. Hughes, the Prime Minister of Australia, who agreed at once that, when the Peace Conference met on the cessation of hostilities, the Dominions must be represented in their own political and legal right, even if there had to be a British Empire delegation as one of the Big Five Allied Powers.

With General Botha carrying the burden in South Africa, and with no departmental responsibilities in London, Smuts probably had more time for disciplined thought than his colleagues in London or South Africa, and than at any subsequent period of his life. He drafted, and the Conference approved, a resolution that the constitutional relations of the Empire should form the subject of a special Imperial Conference to be summoned as soon as possible after the cessation of hostilities: while preserving all existing powers of self-government and complete control of domestic affairs, the Conference should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an imperial commonwealth, and of India as an important part of the same; should recognise the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations; and should provide for continuous consultation in all important matters of common concern. The British Empire, Smuts pointed out, was already taking shape as "the only successful experiment in international government" that the world had ever seen, and, in his address to both Houses of the U.K. Parliament, he added: "Let us take the name of Commonwealth."

The proposed conference was eventually summoned for 1921. In a preliminary debate in the South African Parliament Smuts listed the changes which must be made. Formal correspondence between the Dominion Governments and the United Kingdom must cease to be conducted through the Colonial Office; South Africa's Governor-General must represent only the King, not the British Government. South Africa's foreign relations must cease to be conducted through the British Foreign Office and South Africa must appoint its own diplomatic representatives in foreign capitals. No resolutions must be taken at Commonwealth Conferences without the unanimous consent of all the member countries. He subsequently endorsed the idea put forward by Duncan Hall, a young Australian, of a "general declaration of Constitutional Right". He went to the Conference with a memorandum on these lines in his pocket, but Hughes of Australia and Massey, the New Zealand Prime Minister, objected at the outset to any idea of a "written constitution". Amery from the other side suggested a number of amendments to the memorandum. Smuts' differences with Lloyd George at Versailles, to which I will refer later, had deprived him of the chance of influencing his Dominion colleagues through the British Prime Minister, and he decided, unwisely, not to circulate the memorandum, but to wait for changes in personnel among the other Prime Ministers, which he foresaw, to change the atmosphere towards acceptance of his ideas. He once told me that, when faced with an apparently insuperable difficulty, he just left it alone, and when next he reverted to it, he often found that time had removed the obstacle. What he did not foresee was that there would also be a change of Prime Ministers in South Africa. Hughes went home to boast of "soldering up the constitutional tinkers in their own tin can", and Smuts went home to face Hertzog's criticism for not carrying out his own proclaimed intentions.

It also gave Hertzog the opportunity to claim correctly, after the 1926 Conference, that it was he who had brought about the changes in the Commonwealth which made it possible for South Africa to remain a member. From Mackenzie King of Canada, who had been refused a dissolution by Lord Byng and then won the election granted to his successor, Hertzog received the strongest support for his interpretation of the future role of the Governor-General. The Fine Gael Government of the recently created Irish Free State, harried by de Valera and his Sinn Fein Republicans, was determined to secure complete control of

its own foreign policy, and to conduct it through its own diplomatic representatives in London, Paris and elsewhere. And S.M. Bruce of Australia was to devote his whole future career to making the new structure work. As Smuts had foreseen, the walls of Jericho had fallen, but the trumpets which Joshua used had been given him by Moses. It is only necessary to quote from the conclusions of the Conference to see how closely they approximated to Smuts' proposals from 1917 onwards. Member countries were declared to be "autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations . . . Free institutions are its life-blood. Free co-operation its instrument. Peace, security and progress are among its objects."

This is not to say that there were no differences between Smuts and Hertzog in their approach to the new Commonwealth: memories in this country are sufficiently long to prove the contrary. Smuts had hoped, by laying emphasis on consultation, that a common policy would emerge which would enable the Commonwealth to speak and act decisively in the conflicts which he foresaw would threaten the whole edifice of international peace and security. Hertzog hoped that by defining South African citizenship, by flying a South African flag, by emphasising the independence of South Africa's foreign policy, above all by insisting upon the right to remain neutral in war, as well as the right to participate by its own decision, opposition in South Africa to the Commonwealth would die away and only its utility, for trade, communication and security, remain. The one wanted an active, the other a passive, relationship. The differences went even deeper: to Smuts the Crown was the vital link of the Commonwealth; without common allegiance there was, for him, no basic distinction between the Commonwealth and other international organisations which might or might not serve a common purpose; without the assurance of support in war the Commonwealth could not exercise its necessary and potentially powerful influence for peace. These differences of interpretation lay behind the seemingly sterile conflict in the 'thirties over the doctrine of the Seven Kings. It is enough now to say that it threatened at one time to become of medieval abstruseness and Byzantine complexity. The future was to witness the acceptance of Hertzog's interpretation, but acceptance of Smuts' might have helped to postpone World War II.

When Eire (as the Irish Free State had been renamed) remained neutral throughout World War II, the days of its membership of the Commonwealth were in fact numbered - Smuts would, sadly, have seen Eire leave rather than accommodate the Commonwealth relationship to ties as exigous as those linking Eire to it. But the question of revision arose first over the admission, after World War II, of India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma, and the determination of India to do so only as a Republic. To admit India as such, was to relegate the Crown to a meaningless symbol. "My personal view", Smuts said, "is that there is no middle course between the Crown and the Republic, between in and out of the Commonwealth. If in some nebulous or muddled way you can be both in and out of it, the whole concept of the Commonwealth goes, and what remains is a mere name without substance, the grin without the cat of Alice in Wonderland." Nor would it fail to influence the older members: the Nationalists in South Africa would see ahead of them "a tarred road to a Republic." In the subsequent two decades he would, had he lived, have seen republic after republic joining the Commonwealth, but prepared to leave it at the drop of a hat, if in some connection or another, membership seemed to conflict with its approach to one problem or another - even, as with Tanzania, last month, to threaten withdrawal if arms were supplied to one of the original members of the Commonwealth to defend a sea-route of vital importance to the others. It would, and

did, follow that consultation on foreign policy could not continue on the old basis: top secret information would be withheld for fear of breaches of security, co-operation would become more difficult and tend to be limited to the common denominator of the unimportant, and, inevitably, a two-tier Commonwealth would in practice emerge. To his surprise the National Party proved ready to test the new Commonwealth by continuing South Africa's membership, only, as became inevitable a decade after his death, to withdraw when the Commonwealth threatened to become an instrument of intervention in the domestic affairs of its members. To recognise this sequence is not to imply that it was inevitable in the Commonwealth as it existed between 1926 and 1949; nor to suggest that the enlarged Commonwealth has not played a useful part in bridging the gap between the old and the new member states, between Europe and Asia, and Europe and Africa. This was not however its intended or primary function and the utility to its members of the Commonwealth as now constituted has yet to be proved. It is to Smuts' credit that, almost alone, he stood out against changes which he believed would prove mortal to the structure which he had done so much to create.

The second object of Smuts' policy was to create an international organisation, preferably of all states, to secure peace and prosperity for mankind. He correctly foresaw that small states would be at the mercy of power politics, if they were unable to exert the influence to which their numbers entitled them, and unable to rely upon the protection of a majority of the Great Powers if one or more of the latter should decide to follow a policy of aggression. World War I had shattered the so-called "Concert of Europe" which had kept the world free of major wars for a century, and the only course was, as Canning had seen a century earlier, to call in the new world once again to redress the balance of the old. This he believed could be done by bringing the United States into an international security organisation, which, he hoped, would appeal to the people of all countries by the promise which it held out of a better world. The opportunity had to be seized, which President Wilson offered, of ensuring American participation and support. Within three days of the signature of the armistice on 11 November 1918 Smuts put his ideas to a number of American editors, in December he embodied them in a paper for the Imperial War Cabinet, and in January 1919 he published them in the form of a pamphlet. President Wilson must, he argued, be supported in his plans for a League of Nations, which could profit from the experience of the British Commonwealth: it must not be either a super state or a debating society. He proposed an Assembly to discuss international problems and to recommend solutions, and a Council with responsibility for taking such action as might be necessary to preserve international peace. The League would be universal: just as Campbell Bannerman had, in 1909, brought South Africa into the framework of the British Empire, so Smuts hoped to bring Germany into the framework of the League in 1919. Germany could, he argued, be made in this way a bulwark against the "on-coming Bolshevism of Eastern Europe" and might be won over by "appeasing" her, an early use of a phrase which was later to become ominous. For this reason, and co-operating with Maynard Keynes, the British economist and financial advisor to the delegation at Versailles, he opposed the imposition on Germany of reparations beyond her capacity to pay, and supported the future President Hoover of America in his efforts to feed 30 million people threatened with starvation in central Europe. For the same reason he opposed linking the Covenant of the new League with the Treaty of Versailles, foreseeing that the punitive clauses of the latter would come, in German eyes, to damn the former. He wearied Lloyd George by his importunity, and described the latter's reaction ironically: "The Prime Minister wants to ride to heaven on the back of the devil and he hails me by the way: 'My dear General, you get hold of the tail of this fellow and he will carry us a good way. If we come across Christian walking another way to heaven, we can let go and join Christian's company.' "

Failing this, he wanted Keynes to write an account of what the financial and economic clauses of the Treaty meant and to write it for the plain man who seemed to him the only remaining court of appeal. The result was Keynes' celebrated "Economic Consequences of the Peace", but it failed to achieve its immediate purpose, and the Treaty was signed in unamended form. Germany was later to attribute all its misfortunes to it, and a combination of rock-ribbed isolationists and disappointed idealists caused the United States to refuse to join the League. What Keynes succeeded in doing was to destroy the credibility of both reparations and Treaty. With Russia also excluded for the time being, the League never had the necessary authority to keep the peace or the necessary force to take action against breaches of it. It only needed the requirement of unanimity in the Council, which had been written into the Covenant, to ensure the League's eventual failure. Why then did Botha, who shared Smuts' views, sign the Treaty? Sir Keith Hancock, whose biography of Smuts improves on every reading, is of the view that "there could be no doubt at all that Botha had to sign the Treaty, for otherwise South Africa would be left in the limbo. She would lose her mandate over South West Africa, her membership of the League of Nations, her new status within the Commonwealth and in international law . . . In South Africa it would split the party and ruin all the work of State building which he (Smuts) and Botha had achieved from Vereeniging to Versailles." I am not so sure: South West Africa could have been annexed, with perhaps fewer problems for the future than mandatory status was to create; non-signatories of the Treaty were soon to be admitted to the League; and Smuts might have been driven, willy-nilly, to achieve in 1923 what he left to Hertzog to achieve in 1926. It is difficult to believe that he and Botha would have split on this issue or that the personal stature of either would have been decreased in South Africa.

The League failed, another World War intervened, and Smuts flew in 1945 to the San Francisco Conference. He did not play anything like so significant a part before or at that Conference as he had done before and at Versailles. The draft of the Charter had been hacked out at preliminary discussions between officials of the major Allies at Dumbarton Oaks and later at Yalta. The Conference, after ten weeks of discussions between the Second Elevers of the delegations left behind at the end of the first month, which he found increasingly wearing, endorsed the draft almost in toto. President Roosevelt had died while the Conference was assembling. Winston Churchill was defeated at the General Election in Britain while it was debating, and neither Stalin nor de Gaulle deigned to appear at any time. Over the whole Conference loomed the continuing war in the Far East and the threat of the atom bomb, though of this few delegates were aware. Peacemaking lay in the future, if indeed a peace treaty was ever to be signed. Reading the final version of the Charter Smuts commented that it contained nothing to stir the pulse, or to meet the hopes of mankind. Asked himself to draft a preamble, he did so, in words which once more rang round the world and were at once endorsed by the Conference. Ironically they were to cause South Africa a great deal of trouble in the future. Although the Charter sought to avoid the weakness of the League by placing the responsibility for peacekeeping squarely on the shoulders of the Great Powers, to whom it gave the additional security of a veto in the Security Council, the meeting of Truman, Stalin and first Churchill, then Atlee, at Potsdam had already demonstrated, before the Conference concluded, that there was to be no concert, but rather a cold war, between them. As I flew back with Smuts from the Conference, over the pine forests, the rocks and the lakes of Newfoundland, he remarked: "I have seen many of the deserts of this world, but here is the abomination of desolation." Newfoundland is scarcely as bad as that in summer and I have wondered subsequently whether he had not some premonition at the time of the frustration which was to come so soon and once again to his highest hopes.



At San Francisco Smuts was revered for his contribution to the making of the League, honoured for his contribution to victory, respected and listened to whenever he intervened in debate, but he left the impression of being a relic of the past. Almost alone of the delegates he wore military uniform - "General" Carlos Romulo, the Philippine journalist, was the only other to do so whom I can call to mind at this date - and his age was apparent among the younger generation who had emerged into prominence during World War II. It was to be emphasised ruthlessly at the first Assembly of the new United Nations Organization in 1946, when the Indian delegation raised the question of the treatment of Indians in South Africa, quoting against him the words which he had himself drafted. Mrs. Pandit, spotlighted in a beautiful sari, and using her wonderful, resonant voice to perfection, said that she was not a famous soldier, nor an experienced statesman, she could speak only as a woman, but as a woman she could feel for the oppressed wherever they were, and particularly if they were her own fellow countrymen. As she stood with her arms uplifted, tears glistened on her cheeks, and the Assembly broke into a thunder of applause. In such an environment the cards were stacked against Smuts, as they have remained stacked against South Africa to this day.

The third aspect of his policy which I want to discuss is that towards the other countries of Southern Africa. As a soldier he had no illusions that the Limpopo could ever be a defensible frontier, and his own experience in East Africa during the campaign there in World War I, led him to envisage a two-group relationship with South Africa. The first group, up to the Zambesi, he frankly hoped to incorporate, one way or another, into the Union. The Act of 1909, which constituted it, envisaged the transfer of the three High Commission territories as their natural destiny, and provided for this with the consent of the British Parliament and after the people of the territories had been consulted. During the next decade the British Government were left in no doubt that transfer was then desired in Pretoria, or that the first to be transferred should be Swaziland, with the Bechuana-land Protectorate close behind. Basutoland could wait. At the time Smuts would have much preferred to see South West Africa, Rhodesia or Lourenco Marques taken first. The British colonies beyond the Zambesi would, he hoped, eventually constitute a new East African Dominion.

Botha had emphasised the strategic value of South West Africa to South Africa immediately after the campaign there had ended, and Smuts had constantly stressed, in the Imperial War Cabinet, the importance of not returning it to Germany: to do so would simply mean recreating the threat to South Africa's security, and to the communications of the British Commonwealth, which it had been in 1914. To meet President Wilson's objections to any additions to the British colonial empire he devised the mandatory system by which the ex-German colonies would be entrusted to the most appropriate country to administer them, under the mandate which would lay down specific requirements and with the new League exercising a benevolent supervision through the Permanent Mandates Commission. The class of C mandates, in which South West Africa was to be included, envisaged the territories in question being administered eventually as integral portions of the territory of the mandatory power, as an alternative to the goal of independence for which they, in contradistinction to other mandated territories, were not considered likely to be fitted. The mandate for South West Africa was therefore entrusted by the Principal Allied Powers, to whom it was surrendered by Germany, to His Britannic Majesty to be exercised by the Union of South Africa in

accordance with the terms of an agreement with the League of Nations.

In 1945 Smuts repeated the desire of South Africa to include South West Africa within the Union, but the San Francisco Conference recommended, on the contrary, that such mandated territories as did not become independent at the time, should form the subject of trusteeship agreements with the new United Nations. This time he dug his toes in and refused. The failure of the winding-up session of the League to deal with the future of the remaining mandated territories left the position open. Smuts, in an attempt to influence the Assembly, submitted, for information, a report on the situation in South West Africa between 1939 and 1946, and accompanied it by a request for approval of the incorporation of the territory in the Union which was supported by the Chiefs of the various tribes with the exception of the Herero. They were said to speak for their followers, and it was estimated in this way that there were about 250,000 of the native inhabitants in favour of incorporation and only 30,000 against. The Europeans were also in favour. Mr. Arthur Bottomley, whom we have recently heard advising the African states to eject Britain from the Commonwealth, supported incorporation at the time: "The inhabitants of the territory", he said, "after twenty-five years of life under the mandate system, had expressed themselves, regardless of whether they were Europeans or natives, in favour of incorporation and against any other system of administration. It would appear strange if the United Nations were to gainsay the freely expressed wishes of these people." I was advising Mr. Bottomley at the time and I should like to think that I had drafted that paragraph of his speech, but, quite frankly, I cannot remember.

The Assembly refused however to accept the validity of this method of sounding African opinion, by the Administration and through the Chiefs, and requested that the Union follow other countries administering mandates and replace the mandate for South West Africa by a trusteeship agreement aimed at the eventual grant of independence to the territory. Smuts was not prepared to do so, did not submit a further report as required annually by the terms of the mandate, but did not, at the time, concentrate on the legal argument, that, with the demise of the League, there was no obligation on the Union to make a trusteeship agreement with the United Nations since, even under the Charter, this was optional. Such an agreement had to be concluded between the mandatory and the new Trusteeship Council and the word used was 'may'. He hoped, once again, that time would come to his rescue, but there was weight in Eric Louw's criticism that he should have concentrated, at once, on the legal problem. Smuts refused: "I am not going to the length of talking about . . . juristic questions which lawyers may continue to dispute about. I am not going to weaken our case by raising arguments on these legal technicalities." When his successors were driven back on the legal argument, some years later, the atmosphere had become much more unfavourable to South Africa than in 1946. It is interesting that Smuts always tended to fight shy of arguments in International Law: almost as if he distrusted his ability to carry through a long argument based on principles and precedents with which he was only casually familiar. He preferred to rely upon political arguments and influence.

He showed a similar reluctance in connection with the High Commission territories. Early in World War II, he sounded the British Government about the advisability of transferring the territories, while both Governments were fighting in the common cause. The British, he hoped, might welcome the chance to divest themselves of the burden of administering these territories which, over a period of forty years, they had failed to develop,

which were running into debt, and for which the Act of Union had, as already mentioned, made provision for eventual incorporation within the Union. Winston Churchill quickly pointed to the problems that such a request would make for his Government, if he had to go to Parliament for approval at a time when all attention was focussed on the war and after Parliament had repeatedly, during the intervening years, insisted on the need of prior consultation with the people of the territories. Hertzog had, in the years immediately preceding the war, agreed with the British Government that the latter should instruct their Administrations to explain to the people the benefits of incorporation in the Union, but the hearts of the administrators had not been in the job and their success had been small. With the outbreak of war they had no time for such a task and Smuts gave way, believing that the atmosphere in London would be more favourable at the end of the war. By that time however Atlee's Labour Government was in power, and the chance had been missed. He again asked for transfer but was informed that there would be no chance of securing the approval of the House of Commons.

The third territory Smuts had mentioned in World War I was Lourenco Marques, by which he probably meant Mozambique south of the Zambesi. This project, if it was ever so definite as a project, would now seem inconceivable, but it is necessary to remember that less than twenty years previously Britain and Germany had been making treaties for the division between them of the Portuguese territories in Africa, and it is just possible that a section of the population of Lourenco Marques would, up to World War I, have seen economic advantages in incorporation in the Union. But Portugal's participation, as an ally, during the war made the division of her overseas territories by the other victors unthinkable. Smuts had, during the Tanganyika campaign of 1916, seen the vision of an East Africa Dominion: between such and the Union, Portuguese East Africa might also have seemed an anomaly.

Rhodesia in 1919 was a much more serious objective. Local discontent with the administration of the Chartered Company would bring about changes after the war: a population of 20,000 seemed too small to wish to exist on its own in Central Africa, and Smuts believed that the Union had only to bide its time. Even when the British Government decided to put the issue of responsible Government or incorporation in South Africa to a plebiscite, he did not take steps to see that the advantages of incorporation as a fifth province were brought home to the voters. Sir Charles Coghlan, on the other side, left no stone unturned. Smuts had been in a difficult situation: he had faced a rebellion on the Rand in 1922, the days of his Government were running out and he was a desperately tired man. It is easy to see why he took the decision to hold back, not to expose himself to criticism in Rhodesia for interfering, and to leave it to the good sense of the Rhodesians to see on what side their bread was buttered. Unfortunately they decided that it was buttered on the other side. During World War II relations between Rhodesia and South Africa became very close, but, again by the close of it, Rhodesians in their turn were looking to expansion, and to the north in the future Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

From the vantage point of 1970 Smuts' position among the world statesmen of his day remains a high one. To have contributed greatly to the creation of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the League of Nations and the United Nations, was an unequalled achievement, a tribute at once to the loftiness of his aims, to his sense of the possible, and to his capacity to strike the imagination of mankind. Repeatedly he, the Prime Minister of a small country, remote from the centre of events, took the world stage to drive home his ideas, when the Presidents and Prime Ministers of the most important countries lost their drive or their sense of direction. But, after the years from 1917

to 1919, his appearances on that stage could only be brief and infrequent. He had neither the power basis nor the continuity of power to do more for the world than he did.

For South Africa he won international recognition, and he gave South Africa an international standing which has enabled her to play a significant role in world events throughout the present century. Criticised, denigrated, attacked, the foundations were so well laid that South Africa today is able to pursue its own policy, is responsible for its own defence, and is recognised to be both the richest and the most powerful country on the African continent. The dreams have gone. South Africa has, for twenty years, had to follow a practical, empirical policy of achieving its immediate objectives by the means available to it, and by carefully and realistically assessing the forces which it has had to face. Dr. Verwoerd's volte face over the three High Commission Territories, his recognition that, with resignation from the Commonwealth, South Africa could no longer hope to incorporate them, but could hope to replace Britain as guide and friend, meant that in future South Africa would live and move in the Southern African world, cautiously and carefully building up goodwill and co-operation. Rhodesia in 1965 was followed by Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland and Malawi. South West Africa is being re-organised on South African lines and the United Nations committee responsible for trying to replace the administration has admitted its complete failure to do so. Relations with Mozambique, Angola and Portugal are as close as relations can be with a friendly neighbour, facing similar problems with great courage. The Malagasy Republic is increasingly friendly. The new British Government has emphasised its willingness to co-operate with South Africa in the defence of the Cape sea route.

If Smuts failed to secure his immediate territorial objectives, it was because in a sense he lived on several planes. On the South African plane he was a politician, fighting for his party and his country, seeking immediate objectives and using such means as came to hand. He was perhaps too often content to wait until plums were ripe: if the fruit ripened in a different way then that was the way of the tree. On the world stage his vision was universal, his analysis acute, but his time was always too short, limited as it was to his own appearances on that stage. Others belied his expectations and dashed his hopes. If he was driven to realise that there is no gratitude in international politics, he seldom condemned and he never reproached.

I have had to concentrate upon a particular aspect of Smuts' life, and you will forgive me if, in conclusion, I remind you that there were many others. In the words of a poem written nearly two centuries ago by the English mystic, William Blake, it was given to him :

"To see a world in a grain of sand  
and heaven in a wild flower,  
To hold infinity in the palm of (his) hand  
and eternity in an hour."