

THE ATTITUDE OF THE GERMANS IN SOUTH WEST AFRICA.
TOWARDS THE AFRIKANERS.

by

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I am going to talk about South Africa where, during the last 16 years I have been in close contact with the German element and where I came to know the Germans in political as well as commercial and social spheres. Many of my fellow citizens imagine that it is the fault of the Union-section of the population that there is no co-operation between us and the Germans in South West Africa. I must state emphatically that it is just the opposite. Personally, I played a leading role in Public life in South West Africa. My party and my fellow citizens have done all in their power to live in harmony with the Germans. We have tried to create one nation and to work together for the common weal, In so doing we hoped to weld together a nation based on freedom and the democracy which is indispensable to our happiness.

The settlers who came from the Union, however, were immediately called poor whites and time after time the Union government has been accused of dumping an inferior element for which the Germans eventually would have to pay. When the case of the Angola Boers was under discussion in the Legislative Assembly, one of the German members said: "We must erect a huge poster on the frontier of South Africa with this legend "No rubbish is to be deposited here!". The speaker was then the member for Swakopmund and not a single German member in the House gainsaid him.

Every Africaner who knows the Germans as I know them will agree
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with me that the meaning of Zeesen's "dear listeners" should be "dear s
scum".

When I make this statement I am not swayed by sentiment but it is based on facts and bitter experience. I said "bitter experience". I shall now tell you about all the attempts made by the Afrikaners in South West Affica to bring about civil harmony with the Germans.

According to the Peace Treaty after the World War of 1914-1918, it was decided that all Germans should be repatriated. South Africa, however, magnanimously decided, not only to allow them to remain in South West Africa but also gave them the chance to avail themselves of automatic naturalisation if they so wished. These Germans were advised by the German government at that time to become South African subjects and to throw in their lot with the South African nation. To-day these people have been de-naturalised because they have misused their citizenship. They have plotted against the interests of South Africa in favour of Germany.

The Afrikaners of South West Africa have clear consciences. For many years we have been extending the hand of friendship and have tried to make these Germans feel at home as Afrikaners, but this has been in vain. Every attempt at conciliation, they have regarded as a sign of weakness.

A short while ago I received an anonymous letter inwhich, amongst other things, the writer said: "You wish to live on the same social level as the Germans but this is impossible. Do you expect the German nation to have any dealings with such a type as you are? The only thing which you understand well is to run away from the enemy.

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You proved this from Zoutpansberg to Lamberts Bay."

We always looked upon German as one of the official languages and for all practical purposes it enjoyed equality with Afrikaans and English. In our law courts and in our parliament; in our administrative offices, in our private offices; in the market place, in our streets and on our farms, everywhere this was so.

The Germans were served in their own language. Our administrative as well as our private businesses employed staffs which were as trilingual as the officials in the Union are bilingual. In spite of this the Germans, however, mainly spoke German or English - Afrikaans was despised amongst them.

As a public figure, I was often troubled about this but I was told, "You surely don't expect that our children should learn Afrikaans. It isn't a language. You have no culture, no nation". Here are the words of a high Church dignitary: "We can co-operate with you quite easily if you Afrikaners will only acknowledge that we Germans are your superiors in every sphere."

The mentality of the Nazi German is very difficult for the Afrikaner to understand; for example, one German member of Parliament confided to me that in a meeting which he was addressing, a person had the impudence to ask him questions. He obviously imagined that no-one had the right to ask a member of parliament any questions whatsoever. Nowadays public meetings as such never take place; only members are admitted and these meetings are held behind locked doors, and in addition no Afrikaner can become a member of a German party. They don't believe, as they express it, in

mixed/.....

mixed parties.

I said that the Germans despised the Afrikaners. Here is an excerpt from an official document which was sent to a certain high party official in Hamburg.

EXCERPT FROM A REPORT OF THE LANDESGRUPPEN LEITER N.S.W.A.P.

OF S.W.A. TO AUSLANDS ABTEILUNG N.S.D.A.P. HAMBURG - 18th

DECEMBER, 1933.

"Because these people know well enough that hardly a nation exists which is less capable of making a decision in political matters than the Afrikaners who come out of the unkempt South African forests, they cannot be expected to make political decisions immediately.

"Naturally one can tell them anything and they will believe it; they are pleased to believe it and feel honoured. Often you will find a picture of the Fuehrer on the walls of their mud houses. If South West becomes German again, only a few officials and office seekers will mourn the fact."

EXCERPT FROM A LETTER TO THE AUSLANDSABTEILUNG HAMBURG.

ON 27th MAY, 1934.

"In the Okohandja district there is a strong current against the South African Leader, Mr. Niehaus. General Haritz is already nominated as an opponent to Niehaus. Haritz is very unreliable, just like all farmers, but as an erstwhile rebel he appeals more to us Germans."

Afrikaners in South West Africa can tell you that under

German rule they were allowed to establish Afrikaans schools but the German government retained the right to appoint their own teachers. And in those days I cannot remember a single Afrikaner who was ever appointed a school master.

Talking of schools, according to the London Treaty, the Union government undertook to subsidise certain schools - German schools - for two years; that was in 1920. We subsidised those schools up to 1937. Then we withdrew the subsidy because it was perfectly plain that the German Consul decided on the syllabus for these schools. The South West African administration never interfered with the appointment of teachers to German schools, but we know now that most of these teachers were imported from Germany and appointed by the Nazis.

Just as in Germany, the Nazi authorities in South West Africa burrowed their way into the schools and thence into the State. They even tried, in spite of our hospitality, to undermine the Afrikaners.

Yes, even their leader, Dr. Hirsekorn, who was a member of our Executive Council, said that although they had become Union subjects, their first loyalty was to Germany. When this was under discussion in the parliament Dr. Hirsekorn walked about with a cable from Hitler and openly declared that he and all Germans obeyed Hitler implicitly. When the Union government allowed the Germans automatic naturalisation they did it in order to help the Germans to adapt themselves to the new circumstances, but this object was totally defeated. Before we realised that our attempts had come to nothing

we made an honest attempt to work out a real basis of understanding. At a conference we unanimously decided to regard ourselves as one nation without any regard to our antecedents. Everyone should have an equal share in the Government. German would now be an official language. We did this all in good faith.

Scarcely was this proposal accepted but fortunately, before it became law, when the Germans began passing motions of nonconfidence in the administrator of those days, Mr. Werth. Shortly afterwards there was a by-election at Grootfontein and the Germans wrote in their newspaper: "To-day the watchword is 'Give us the best man'. But who is the best man? For us Germans it will always be a German."

The greater majority of Afrikaners in S.W.A. are exNationalists and many of them were pro-German. And today? There are very few of them who are of the same opinion. They have the facts at their finger-tips so they can judge. Opinions based on experience can never be foolish.

Years before the war all young Germans were called up for military training in Germany; most of them went and today they are in the German army. They had all the rights and privileges of Union citizens but they never shouldered similar responsibilities. They were always for Germany. The greater majority of the Afrikaners in South West Africa are behind the Union government and the war effort. They certainly do not wish to be ruled by the Nazis.

I should like to say that there are certain exceptions as far as the German speaking population goes. There are some who are whole-heartedly with us. Some of them have joined our

army and are fighting in the North. There are many more who would have joined us if it were not for German intimidation.

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