



If any of the 156 treason accused now appearing at the Drill Hall should be committed for trial at the end of the preparatory examination, Mr. Oswald Pirow, Q.C., will lead the prosecution team, it was reported in the press recently.

Other members of the prosecuting team would be Mr. Japie de Vos, Q.C., who was a member of the Government's team in the constitutional case; Mr. M. S. Louw, a son of Eric Louw, the Minister of External Affairs; Mr. G. C. Hoexter, a son of the Judge of Appeal, and Mr. J. Trengove, a Pretoria barrister.

# WHO IS THIS MAN PIROW?

OSWALD Pirow is no longer practising at the bar. Most of the time he is busy producing pineapples and bananas on his farm at Bushbuckridge, in the Transvaal, so that for all practical purposes he would be emerging from retirement to conduct the prosecution in the treason trial.

Pirow's name is little known to the new generation of South Africans. But in the 20s and 30s he was a leading member of the Union Government, Minister of Justice and Minister of Defence, well known as an admirer of the Nazis abroad, one of the authors of the Riotous Assemblies Act as we know it today.

Pirow was born in the Transvaal in 1891, of German descent. In his youth he was a champion boxer and weight-lifter, won swimming competitions and was a formidable wrestler and a competent horseman.

## Entered Cabinet

He started his career as an advocate, and eventually became a K.C. In June, 1929, he entered Hertzog's Nationalist Government as Minister of Justice in place of Tielman Roos, who had resigned on account of ill-health.

One of his first acts as Minister was to frame amendments to the Riotous Assemblies Act giving him the power to ban meetings and deport "undesirables" from one area of the Union to another, without trial—provisions which were later taken over and expanded in the Suppression of Communism Act by the present Minister of Justice Swart.

As a measure of the esteem in which he was held in the democratic movement, his effigy was burnt by Africans at a public protest meeting at the time.

He also had a hand in framing the "Native Bills," eventually passed in 1936, which deprived the Cape Africans of their vote on the common roll.

As Minister of Justice, the man responsible for the conduct of the police force, Pirow always took a "tough" line against the people's organisations.

## Defence Minister

When the Hertzog-Smuts coalition was formed in 1933, Pirow became Minister of Railways and Defence, and was responsible for the preparation of South Africa's military strength for the war which eventually broke out in 1939.

His first contribution to the army was the special service battalion (S.S.B.) organised on the Nazi model as an auxiliary to the permanent force. Each unit consisted of 1,200 men, mostly poor whites who had little prospect of other employment at a time when

tens of thousands were workless as a result of the great economic slump.

His second contribution to the army was the bush cart, South Africa's "secret weapon." Just how effective it was may be gauged by the following quotation from the Monitor of March 22, 1946:

"The country will never forgive Pirow for his pro-German stand. As Minister of Defence he was voted a fairly large sum of money shortly before the war broke out. Nevertheless, some six months later his new army was found by General Smuts, who succeeded Pirow at the outbreak of the war, to be a 'paper bush-cart' army. . . . In these days of giant tanks and armoured cars, it seems incredible that in 1939, after Pirow had seen the German military machine with his own eyes, he still toyed with wooden bushcarts pulled by oxen. He explained that these bushcarts would be a powerful weapon in bushveld warfare."

Only 40 of these carts had been built by the time war broke out, though a further 600 were under construction.

"During the war these bushcarts did see service in military camps. They were reinforced with corrugated iron and used as dirt removers!"

The racialists did, of course, forgive Pirow his Nazi sympathies; but the country could never forget his bushcart fiasco. A great gust of laughter accompanied Pirow's departure from the political stage, and must have haunted him in his years of wandering in the wilderness thereafter.

## Admired Hitler

Just how Nazi-minded was Pirow?

He visited Germany twice in the thirties, and met the leaders of all the fascist countries during his tours of Europe.

Writing in his paper Die Nuwe Orde of February 14, 1946, of his meeting with Hitler in 1938, Pirow said:

"His words came in a flood, but the ideas were logical, crystal clear and strong. No, strong is not the right word. They were as gigantic as the mountains outside (at Berchtesgaden) and like the mountains they stretched to the horizon. It was the language, the philosophy of the 20th, the revolutionary century.

"When we left a few hours later, I said to my friends: 'He is the greatest man of his age, perhaps the greatest of the last 1,000 years.' THAT IS STILL MY OPINION TODAY!"

Similarly he described Mussolini as "one of the greatest men of his time. . . . He introduced the Revolution of the 20th Century and later generations will honour him for it."

When Soviet troops marched into Berlin, and Hitler was killed, Pirow mourned: "Adolf Hitler

has fallen in the van of the fight against Bolshevism. He was the greatest man of his age, and one of the greatest of all times."

When Goering and his pals were executed after the Nuremberg trial, Die Nuwe Orde printed a special edition. The whole of the front page was devoted to a memorial "in memory of the martyrs of Nuremberg," whose names were printed in huge type inside a heavy black border.

Even Tielman Roos, who had been Pirow's first political leader, was forced to repudiate him in the 30s as a "Little Hitler."

## The New Order

After his disappearance from the front rank of politics, Pirow devoted himself to the spreading of fascist ideas in South Africa through his New Order movement.

This is what he had to say about the Jews in his newsletter of October 1945:

"I firmly believe that if every Jew could vanish from the earth, the world as a whole would be a better place."

During the war, when brave South Africans were dying to save the world from Nazism, Pirow had the effrontery to publish his fascist blue-print for our country, entitled "The New Order for South Africa as revealed to Oswald Pirow." It was described by the late E. B. Dawson in the Sunday Express at the time as "an exact model of the Nazi constitution."

Note the use of the word "revealed." Pirow claims divine guidance for his fascism.

The first aim in this document is:

**The rejection in form and character of democracy and the establishment of a South African Christian European National Socialist Republic founded on state authority and civilian discipline.**

Think of the Freedom Charter's promise of equality, and read this from Pirow's charter:

**"No influence which might create the possibility, even in the remotest future, of any form of equality between European and Non-European will be tolerated."**

As for immigration into the country, he stipulated that "The entrance of Jews and other undesirable persons will be prevented."

Naturally, in Pirow's Nazi state there could only be one function for the Non-Europeans to fulfil: "The Non-Europeans will be subject to compulsory labour service."

## Use of Violence

Pirow has not always been so keen on constitutional methods of struggle as he appears today. Die



Oswald Pirow, as seen by an artist in 1942.

Transvaler (October 5, 1944) quoted him as saying that "there were more than half-a-dozen ways of getting into power. Although force was stupid at the present time, he did not bind himself to exclude unconstitutional and illegal methods if the interests of the volk should demand it."

While South Africans were fighting on the battlefield, Pirow was praising "the disciplined youth, the Ossewa Brandwag, who will be for us the stormtroopers of South Africa." And being greeted at public meetings with cries of "Heil Pirow."

In 1947 he even forgot himself so far as to lay himself open to a charge of public violence. Incensed by the refusal of the students of Wits to introduce apartheid in their Rag procession, he wrote in Die Nuwe Orde:

"The time has come for firm action from the nation itself and physical violence. The young men of white South Africa shall remove from the public these outgrowths of a spiritual destruction. Although it is an offence to incite people to public violence, today

we offer this advice: where Non-Europeans intrude among Europeans throw them out on their necks. Where Europeans entice them, and play with them, throw these renegades out with them. There are many occasions when a blow of the fist is a sign of vitality and not of lack of refinement."

He was fined £10 or two months.

## Anti-Communism

Pirow spent his last few years in Parliament trying to persuade the Government to fight against the Communists instead of the Nazis. The Star described the speech with which he introduced his anti-Communist Bill as "this rather worn-out attempt to ape the Nazi scare technique. . . . Mr. Pirow's attempt to make the flesh creep with a Communist plot failed rather dismally from the start." (February 11, 1952.)

Said the Sunday Times: "A damp squib."

The war had no sooner come to an end in Europe than Pirow called upon the Western powers to launch an immediate attack on the Soviet Union. The Cape Times commented: "The most charitable comment one can make about Pirow, who has been making speeches again, is that his head ought to be examined."

The paper added: "Can democracy reasonably allow its freedoms to be abused by people whose declared purpose is to subvert democracy and eliminate freedoms? In other words, how much longer is any half-witted Nazi who feels so inclined going to be allowed to carry on with the work of undermining all for which South Africa fought?" (Cape Times, August 20, 1945.)

Is there any more to say? This is the man who has been chosen, from amongst all others, to present the Government's charge of treason against the 156. Perhaps it would be fitting to end this profile with Oswald Pirow's own definition of treason contained in the final paragraph of his New Order: "Our party will have to develop into a wide and embracing National movement, and all other parties will have to disappear. We can dispute the actual form of the republic, but he who wants to strike a compromise over its nature commits treason."

## Randfontein's Bus Boycott Victory

RANDFONTEIN.

Randfontein people scored a resounding victory last week when they won a reduction in bus fares following their twenty-week boycott of the Greyhound bus services.

The fares on all the routes from the locations to the town have been reduced by two-pence.

During the boycott leading members of the residents' transport committee were arrested no less than five times on a variety of petty charges. The people, however, stood firm and refused to be intimidated.

The leaders of the people have dismissed with contempt the suggestion by the local Native Administration Department that in future the African people should first consult their "Township father, the location superintendent" when they have complaints against the bus services.

## ZEERUST TRIBESMEN FINED

Seven Zeerust tribesmen who pleaded guilty to convening or addressing an unlawful gathering were fined a total of £365 last week. They are lodging an appeal.

**Collection Number: AG2887**

**Collection Name: Publications, New Age, 1954-1962**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

*Location:* Johannesburg

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