

THE UNITED PARTY AND THE 1950 GENERAL ELECTION IN SOUTH-WEST AFRICA

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Die Verenigde Party en die algemene verkiesing in Suidwes-Afrika van 1950

In sy boek *General elections in South Africa, 1943-1970* motiveer K.A. Heard sy besluit om nie die 1950 Algemene Verkiesing in Suidwes-Afrika te bespreek nie met die stelling dat die gebied 'outside the mainstream of South African history and politics...' geval het.¹ Hoewel nie sonder 'n mate van geldigheid nie, is so 'n stelling misleidend.

Eerstens verbloem Heard se stelling die aansienlike mate waartoe die Suidwes-Afrika-kiesers teen 1950 reeds betrokke was by die strydpunte van die destydse Suid-Afrikaanse politieke debat. Hierdie betrokkenheid het duidelik geblyk uit die aard van die verkiesing. Dit was in wese 'n stryd tussen die Herenigde Nasionale Party en die Verenigde Party, wat gevoer is deur hul gevolmagtigdes. In hierdie stryd het Suid-Afrikaanse binnelandse aangeleenthede 'n beslissende rol gespeel.

Tweedens ignoreer Heard se stelling die mate waartoe die verkiesingskwessies die politieke besluitnemingsproses in Suid-Afrika beïnvloed het. Die insluiting van klousules in die Wet op Suid-Afrikaanse Burgerskap van 1950 om die gevoelens van gedemokratiseerde Duitssprekendes in Suidwes-Afrika te akkommodeer, en die besluit om aan die oorlog in Korea deel te neem, is maar twee sulke voorbeelde.

Derdens hou Heard se stelling nie rekening met die feit dat die uitslag van die verkiesing direkte en diepgaande gevolge vir Suid-Afrika gehad het nie. Die verkiesing was een van 'n aantal belangrike stappe wat die Malan-regering sedert 1948 gedoen het om sy bewind te versterk. Dit is egter belangrik om te beseft dat die uitslag van die verkiesing geensins 'n uitgemaakte saak was nie.

Die gevolge van 'n nederlaag en die besondere klein meerderheid waarmee die Regering die verkiesing gewen het, illustreer die omvang van die berekende risiko wat Malan geneem het. Dit verklaar verder ook die hoeveelheid energie en geld wat die strydende partye in die verkiesingstryd gestort het.

In his study *General elections in South Africa, 1943-1970*, K.A. Heard justifies omitting a discussion of the 1950 General Election in South-West Africa on the grounds that the territory lay 'outside the mainstream of South African history and politics.....' While not without a degree of validity such an assertion is misleading.

In the first instance it obscures the considerable extent to which the South-West African electorate had, by 1950, been drawn into the issues which informed the contemporary South African political debate. This was evident in the nature of the electoral confrontation. It was, in essence, a contest between the Herenigde Nasionale Party and the United Party, fought through their proxies, in which South African domestic issues played a crucial role.

Secondly it ignores the extent to which the imperatives of the election campaign itself affected the political decision making process within South Africa. The inclusion

K.A. Heard, *General elections in South Africa, 1943-1970* (Cape Town, 1974), p. XVIII.

of clauses in the South African Citizenship Act of 1950 so as better to accommodate the sensitivities of denaturalised German-speakers in South-West Africa and the decision to participate in the war in Korea are but two of a number of examples.

Thirdly the outcome of the General Election held direct and profound consequences for South Africa for it was one of the more important of a number of steps which the Malan Government had, since 1948, taken so as more firmly to entrench itself in power. That said it is important to recognise that the outcome of the election was not a foregone conclusion.

The consequences of defeat and the very narrow margin of the Government's victory illustrate the extent of the calculated risk which Malan took and account for the considerable energy and expense which the protagonists devoted to the contest.

Introduction

Despite their ideological alignment with the National Party and the South African Party respectively, the National Party of South-West Africa (N.P.S.W.A.) and the South-West Party (S.W.P.) merged in January 1927 to become the United National South-West Party (U.N.S.W.P.).² This union was, however, merely a marriage of convenience, for its primary purpose was to prevent German-speaking voters from securing control of the territory's Legislative Assembly on a split vote.³ Thus, the re-establishment of the N.P.S.W.A., in 1939, though ostensibly due to the U.N.S.W.P.'s rejection of a policy of neutrality in the event of a war in Europe, was, in fact, ascribable to the declining influence of the German-speaking population. Not only had they become numerically less important⁴ but, in 1936, membership of the most important political organisation for German-speakers in S.W.A., the pro-Nazi 'Deutsche Suedwest Bund', had been effectively prohibited.⁵ The outbreak of war saw the German-speaking population's political importance further diminished when the Union Government resorted to internment and, from 1942, denaturalisation.⁶

Contesting the 1940 Legislative Assembly elections on a platform of neutrality and the incorporation of S.W.A. into the Union after 'friendly negotiations'⁷ with a Germany intent on reclaiming its former colonies, the N.P.S.W.A. won only two of the twelve seats. In the 1945 Assembly elections the U.N.S.W.P., riding the crest of enthusiasm generated by the successful conclusion of the war, swept the board by winning all twelve elected seats.⁸

But the United Party's (U.P.) struggle to come to terms with a changed post-war environment revealed just how equivocal electoral support for its proxy in S.W.A. in fact was. The latter suffered in particular as a result of the humiliating failure of the Smuts Government's 1946 attempt to forestall international criticism of its policy towards South Africa's Indian community by trading segregation for a qualified franchise.⁹ Especially embarrassing was the success of the Indian Government's response to Smuts's stratagem, for it managed to garner sufficient support at the United Nations to get Smuts's application to that body for

2. P.S. Joubert, *Partypolitieke groepering in Suidwes-Afrika Sedert 1915* (M.A. dissertation, U.O.F.S., 1959), p. 80. The N.P.S.W.A. had been established in 1924 and the S.W.P. in 1926. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

3. I. Goldblatt, *History of South West Africa* (Johannesburg, 1971), p. 229.

4. While the German-speaking population had, by 1936, grown marginally above its 1921 level of 7 855, the total white population had, between those years, increased by 11 486. *Ibid.*, p. 265. In 1929 the 'Union' section held eleven and the German-speakers seven of the eighteen elected and nominated seats. *Ibid.*, p. 230. In 1934 the seats held were 14 and 4 respectively. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

6. P.S. Joubert, 'Partypolitieke groepering,' p. 176.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

8. The N.P.S.W.A. contested 11 of the seats. There were 12 420 registered voters 1 600 of whom were on active service. The U.N.S.W.P. won 5 485 votes and the N.P.S.W.A. 3 162. Just prior to the election the N.P.S.W.A. established its own newspaper *Die Suidwester*. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

9. The Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act (Act No. 28 of 1946).

permission to annex S.W.A. rejected.¹⁰

Lacking a recognised leadership that would have enabled the Party more effectively to defend itself, poorly organised and fielding some indifferent candidates, the fortunes of the U.N.S.W.P. went into rapid decline.¹¹ In a July 1947 by-election it just held the Gobabis constituency. In June and November 1948 it lost Swakopmund and Otjiwarongo respectively to the N.P.S.W.A.¹² An important contributory reason for the Party's loss of these seats was Malan's willingness to show greater generosity than Smuts had in respect of white South-West African representation in the Union's parliament.

2. Parliamentary representation for S.W.A.

The failure of his application to annex S.W.A. had left as Smuts's only viable option the *de facto* incorporation of the territory through the implementation of the 1936 van Zyl Commission's recommendation that 'the country could legally be governed as a province of the Union, subject to the Mandate.'¹³ It was on this basis that in January 1948, offering a mutually advantageous united front on the issue, a joint U.N.S.W.P. and N.P.S.W.A. delegation asked Smuts for eight seats in the Union House of Assembly. He offered four.¹⁴ After the General Election of May that year, the new Government, clinging to power by a narrow majority, showed greater enthusiasm for the issue. Calling the question of representation 'urgent' Colonel P.I. Hoogenhout, the Administrator of S.W.A., on 7 July 1948 arranged a meeting between the Executive Committees of both of the S.W.A. parties in order again to arrive at joint proposals to present to the Government.¹⁵

The proposals which emerged from the joint committee were, as was only to be expected, extremely favourable to the interests of South-West African whites. Denying the right of the Union Government to levy direct taxes on the territory, the proposals also repudiated the imposition of provincial status which, the committee asserted, would not satisfy 'die spesiale omstandighede van die Gebied.'¹⁶ It was on the premise of these 'special circumstances' that the proposals asserted the right of S.W.A. to eight seats in the Union House of Assembly¹⁷ and six in the Senate.¹⁸

The final agreement, which was reached in October 1948 while Malan was on a visit to the territory, was, though generous, a substantial modification of the joint committee's initial proposals. It provided the white electorate of S.W.A. with six seats in the Assembly and four in the Senate.¹⁹ The changes failed to mollify the opposition press which proved especially hostile to an agreement which granted S.W.A.

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10. In December 1946 the General Assembly rejected the South African Government's application by 37 votes. There were no votes in favour and nine abstentions. I. Goldblatt, *South West Africa*, p. 250.
 11. *The Forum*, 7.1.50, p. 8.
 12. *Ibid.*
 13. I. Goldblatt, *South West Africa*, p. 234.
 14. *Rand Daily Mail*, 16.1.48, p. 7.
 15. *Daily News*, 8.7.48, p. 1.
 16. Carnegie Library, Stellenbosch (CLS), D.F. Malan Papers (DFM), 1/1/2413, S.W.A., N. Fraser - P.I. Hoogenhout, 3.8.48.
 17. On the basis of an expected increase in the size of the white population of the territory the proposals also provided for an enlargement of the number of S.W.A. M.P.'s to a maximum of twelve. *Ibid.*, S.W.A. Population: 1946 Census - whites 37 858; Africans and Coloureds 322 179. 1951 Census - whites 48 588, Africans and Coloureds, 366 010. Central Archives, Pretoria (CAP), J.G. Strydom Papers (JGS), Vol. 58, p. 5, No. 116, n.d.
 18. CLS, DFM, 1/1/2413, S.W.A., N. Fraser - P.I. Hoogenhout, 3.8.48. Four of the Senators were to be chosen on a proportional basis and two were to be nominated 'vanweë die spesiale kennis wat hulle van inboorling belange in die Gebied dra.' *Ibid.*
The original agreement provided for only two Senators but Malan agreed to discuss the possibility of four S.W.A. Senate seats with the Cabinet. *Rand Daily Mail*, 22.10.48, p. 1. It was subsequently agreed that two Senators would be nominated by the Government while two more would be elected after the General Election by an electoral college composed of the territory's Parliamentary and Legislative Assembly representatives. *Ibid.*, 5.8.50, p. 7.

parliamentary constituencies of only 3 000 voters each as against a Union average of about 8 000. A leader in the *Rand Daily Mail* struck a particularly raw nerve when it noted that 'the vote of a German in S.W.A. will be worth three to four times the vote of a South African resident on the Witwatersrand.'²⁰

When members of the Opposition criticized both the extent of the proposed S.W.A. representation and the independent control a Government appointed Commission subsequently recommended that the territory be allowed over its own finances,²¹ Herenigde Nasionale Party (H.N.P.) members were able very effectively to retort that in 1922 Smuts had offered Southern Rhodesia, which had an even smaller white population than that of S.W.A.,²² a very substantial financial settlement²³ together with ten seats in the Union Assembly and five in the Senate.²⁴ Even *The Forum*, no friend of the H.N.P., had to concede

....that it would have been quite impracticable for members of parliament in country areas to represent any more space. As it is some constituencies entail five hundred miles of travel...²⁵

With the Government having made the re-naturalisation of the almost five thousand Germans denaturalised since 1942 a formality²⁶ and with two by-elections in the territory having recently been lost, the future of the U.N.S.W.P., despite its status as the majority party in the Legislative Assembly, looked bleak. It was with this in mind that, on 1 April 1949, with very little to lose, Smuts stole H.N.P. thunder by severely criticising Malan during the debate on the South-West Africa Affairs Amendment Bill for not having provided the proposed S.W.A. M.P.s with the right to vote on financial matters or on motions of confidence.²⁷ More confident about the N.P.S.W.A.'s position than he had been when the Bill was being drawn up and conscious of the propaganda value to the U.N.S.W.P. were he to reject Smuts's criticism, Malan conceded to the Bill's amendment.²⁸ He nevertheless ran a considerable risk in doing so for, despite the auspicious by-election results, the outcome of the election for the parliamentary seats was by no means a foregone conclusion.²⁹

3. Preparing for the election campaign

One key variable in the election was the outcome of the contest for the loyalty of former Hertzogites in S.W.A. some sixty percent of whom were members of the U.N.S.W.P.³⁰ Confronted with the possibility of Havenga's defection to the U.P.³¹ and the Afrikaner Party's (A.P.) decision not to participate in the 1949

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20. *Ibid.*, 23.10.48, p. 9. The 34 Witwatersrand constituencies contained an average of 10 366 voters.
 21. It had been agreed that this arrangement could only be altered at the request of the S.W.A. Legislative Assembly. CAP, J.C. Smuts Papers (JCS), Vol. 389/3, Party Letter to U.P. Speakers participating in S.W.A., 8.8.50.
 22. Southern Rhodesia's population in 1922 consisted of 33 000 whites and 770 000 Africans. E.A. Walker, *A history of Southern Africa* (London, 1965), p. 595.
 23. Smuts had offered to pay £7 000 000 to the British South Africa Company for its Rhodesian assets excluding its mineral rights. He had also offered a special grant of £500 000 spread over ten years. *Ibid.*, p. 598.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. *The Forum*, 12.8.50, p. 6.
 26. By August 1950 there were about 3 500 enfranchised German-speakers in S.W.A. *Cape Argus*, 1.9.50, p. 3.
 27. A.G. Barlow, *Almost in confidence* (Cape Town, 1952), p. 325.
 28. *Ibid.* Act 23 of 1949 accorded S.W.A. M.P.'s the same privileges and powers as those enjoyed by Union members.
 29. Had the U.N.S.W.P. won all six seats then the Government's majority in the Assembly would have been reduced to one.
 30. United Party Archives, Unisa (UPA), U.P. Papers (UP), Central Head Office, S.W.A., Vol. 1, L. Taljaard - O.A. Oosthuizen, 24.12.48.
 31. W.B. White, *The South African Parliamentary opposition, 1948-1953* (Unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Natal, 1989), pp. 98-106.

Provincial Council Elections,³² the H.N.P. and its ally in S.W.A. had to move rapidly so as to constitute themselves as the appropriate political home for the former followers of Hertzog. It was this reason that, in March 1949, the N.P.S.W.A. undermined an A.P. attempt to establish branches of the Party in the territory. It did so by deciding, soon after the H.N.P. in the Cape Province had also decided to do so,³³ to heal the 1942 breach by permitting members of the A.P. allied Ossewa-Brandwag once again to become full Party members.³⁴ Three months later, reflecting the A.P.'s weakened position after the H.N.P. had managed to survive the Provincial Elections without its support, the N.P.S.W.A. further consolidated its base when Havenga announced that he had granted the A.P. in S.W.A. permission to unite with it.³⁵

Despite the obvious weakening of the U.N.S.W.P.'s position U.P. assistance to the party had to wait until 31 May 1949 when, sensitive to accusations of surrendering S.W.A.'s interests to those of the Union, the U.N.S.W.P. was to hold a special conference to discuss the issue.³⁶ Relations between the two parties were however close. A letter to Smuts written four weeks prior to the conference by an executive of the U.N.S.W.P., made it clear that there was 'n sterk simpatieke houding van die V.N.S.W.P. teenoor u party, en dit is net 'n kwessie van tyd voordat ons geheel en al by u sal aansluit.'³⁷

The congruence in the political platforms of the two parties was also reflected in the organisational similarities between them. Unlike the H.N.P. or the N.P.S.W.A., neither the U.P. nor the U.N.S.W.P. was an ethnically based, tightly disciplined, ideological party with a mass, card-carrying membership. Loosely organised and without a formal, systematised relationship with the wealthy donors upon whom both were dependent, the two parties lacked the means to replicate their rival's ability to ensure a constant and reliable flow of revenue from their grassroots supporters. It was thus not surprising that the U.N.S.W.P., with limited resources of its own, agreed to accept U.P. assistance, assistance which the latter, in the throes of its post-General Election attempt to re-organise, could ill afford to provide.

Publicly the U.N.S.W.P. undertook to accept U.P. aid conditional upon the election campaign being waged under its own control and upon its successful parliamentary candidates being 'in no respect...subject to the decisions of the caucus of the United Party of South Africa.'³⁸ In fact, in terms of a confidential agreement with the U.P., it acknowledged 'in its Union relations, the principle of full co-operation with the Union United Party'...³⁹ For its part the U.P. acknowledged 'in principle its co-operation with the South-West Africa United Party, both in regard to personal and financial assistance for the party, on the same basis as is received by the provinces in all Union concerns.'⁴⁰ It was unification in all but name.

Subsequent discussions between representatives of the U.N.S.W.P. and the U.P. intermediary Senator Henry Tucker, revealed that the U.N.S.W.P. would only be able to raise about £6 000 towards the cost of the campaign.⁴¹ Estimating the expenditure on each of the eighteen seats⁴² which the Party then proposed to

32. CAP, N.C. Havenga Papers (NCH), Vol. 27, Afrikaner Eenheid, N.C. Havenga - D.F. Malan, 4.14.48.

33. *Ibid.*, 9.11.48.

34. *Die Volkstem*, 23.3.49, p. 1. In June 1947 the O.B. had secretly undertaken to establish as many ostensibly A.P. branches throughout the country as possible. CAP, NCH, Vol. 27, D.F. Malan - N.C. Havenga, 25.6.47. By 1948 some 80 per cent of A.P. supporters were assumed also to be members of the O.B. Hans van Rensburg, the O.B. leader, was a member of the A.P. Executive Committee. G.M. Carter, *The politics of inequality: South Africa since 1948* (New York, 1977), p. 242.

35. CAP, NCH, Vol. 27, Verklaring uitgereik deur die Dagbestuur van die Afrikanerparty van Suidwes Africa, 18.6.49.

36. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, Central Action Committee Minutes 1949-1950, No. 49. Meeting of the Action Committee, 25.5.49.

37. CAP, JCS, Vol. 281, No. 108, Dr. F.J. Marais - J.C. Smuts, 3.5.49.

38. *Cape Argus*, 9.6.49, p. 9.

39. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A., Vol. 1, Draft Declaration of Relations between the United Parties of the Union and S.W.A., n.d.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, Correspondence and Reports 1949-1969, H. Tucker - J. Higgerty, 11.1.50.

contest at £1 500 and the cost of running the Party organisation at £4 000, the total arrived at was £31 000.⁴³ It was on this basis, even though the amount was 'regarded as being on the high side',⁴⁴ that the U.P. tentatively, and secretly, undertook to pay the U.N.S.W.P. £25 000 to cover its election costs.⁴⁵

Not only did the U.P. undertake to pay the bulk of the U.N.S.W.P.'s expenses it also, in September 1949, temporarily and reluctantly took over, in view of the lack of experience and availability of local officials, direct control of the party itself.⁴⁶ The forced withdrawal of the seconded U.P. official in October in order to assist in the restructuring of the Union U.P. revealed the weakness of the U.N.S.W.P. at the executive level. The Party's titular Secretary, in protesting the withdrawal, wrote that:

Die aanstelling van 'n nuwe hoof van die organisasie is as gevolg van omstandighede buite die kwessie omdat ons dood eenvoudig nie 'n plaaslike persoon het wat in hierdie stadium daardie werk op hom kan neem nie.⁴⁷

The Party's lack of strong local leadership and its implicit reliance upon Smuts in this regard proved all the more serious in view of the events at the United Nations which were, at that time, inflaming white attitudes in the territory. In the first instance the Rev. Michael Scott had, in the face of strenuous objections by, and to the considerable embarrassment of the South African Government, succeeded in laying petitions from Herero, Nama and Damara chiefs before the Trusteeship Committee protesting the Malan Government's 1948 repudiation of United Nations sovereignty over S.W.A.⁴⁸ In the second, and partly in response to Scott's actions, the General Assembly had responded to Eric Louw's reiteration of Malan's refusal either to place S.W.A. under Trusteeship or to continue to report annually to the United Nations by resolving to refer the question of the legal status of the territory to the International Court of Justice at The Hague.⁴⁹ Referring to the U.P. position that the Government should continue to submit reports so as not to weaken its case for the continued existence of the mandate, a U.P. official in S.W.A. wrote in August 1949:

We cannot close our eyes to the fact that there is a process of "crossing the floor" among our supporters⁵⁰...

Nevertheless his overall assessment of the U.N.S.W.P.'s election chances remained remarkably optimistic for, in September, referring to the evidence which the Party proposed to submit to the Delimitation Commission, he wrote:

The figures were made available yesterday, and we have tried our plan - it fits in and our arguments follow very logically... The state of the seats remains the

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42. Six Parliamentary seats and twelve Legislative Assembly seats. No explanation was provided as to why the estimate was limited to eighteen seats and not the 24 which the U.N.S.W.P. did in fact contest.
 43. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A., Vol. I, Correspondence and Reports 1949-1969, H. Tucker - J. Higgerty, 11.1.50.
 44. *Ibid.*, Central Head Office, S.W.A., Vol. 1, Correspondence and Reports 1949-1969, H. Tucker - J. Higgerty, 11.1.50.
 45. *Ibid.*
 46. *Ibid.*, G.J. Labuschagne - O.A. Oosthuizen, 28.9.49. During the period 21.7.49 to 30.8.50, 27 prominent U.P. members assisted in S.W.A. for periods ranging from six days to four weeks. In addition seventeen paid U.P. organisers were sent for varying periods. *Ibid.*, Election Campaign 1950, Summary of Report on the S.W. African Election Campaign, n.d.
 47. *Ibid.*, F.A. Venter - O.A. Oosthuizen, 5.10.49.
 48. T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa, A modern history* (London, 1991), p. 446.
 49. I. Goldblatt, *South West Africa*, p. 250.
 50. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A., Vol. I, Correspondence and Reports 1949-1969. G.J. Labuschagne - O.A. Oosthuizen, 6.8.49.

same - four good, one doubtful and one hopeless.⁵¹

Although more self-sufficient than was the U.N.S.W.P., September 1949 marked the start of direct H.N.P. assistance to the N.P.S.W.A. for, in that month, the H.N.P. in the Transvaal undertook to send two organisers and a financial contribution of £500 to the N.P.S.W.A.⁵² Further immediate organisational assistance appears, though, to have been minimal, for the *Rand Daily Mail*, in an April 1950 article on S.W.A., reported: 'The United Party has for some time had five permanent organisers in the field - three more than the Nationalists have had up to the present...'⁵³ In May 1950, however, an H.N.P. delegation headed by F.C. Erasmus, Minister of Defence and the Party's 'leading expert on tactics and organisation',⁵⁴ flew to Windhoek 'to instruct the candidates in the party line to be followed in the elections, co-ordinate territorial with national policy and propaganda, survey weaknesses and assign help where it is most needed.'⁵⁵

4. The election campaign

The main thrust of party political activity until July 1950 was voter registration. On the 24th of that month, when nominations closed⁵⁶ and campaigning proper could begin, 23 901 voters had been registered, 3 393 more than the 20 508 upon whom the Delimitation had been based.⁵⁷

Reporting back to the U.P. on the state of the campaign five days after the close of registration and two weeks after Havenga had made an appeal to the South-West African electorate to vote for the N.P.S.W.A.,⁵⁸ Senator H. Tucker sounded a cautionary note. After remarking that the registration of voters by the U.N.S.W.P. had appeared, despite its initial organisational weakness, to have been very thorough, he added that the Party

...is as confident as ever and regards three Union seats as a certainty, four as likely and five as possible... It is admitted that margins are likely to be very narrow in most seats and consequently I regard the estimate as optimistic.⁵⁹

One of the reasons for Tucker's qualification was an acknowledgement that the U.P. had suffered a loss of electoral support as a consequence of, within clearly defined parameters, its principled opposition to the torrent of divisive legislation which the Government had introduced during the 1949 and 1950 sessions of

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51. *Ibid.*, 28.9.49. The report of the Delimitation Commission was published in a Government Gazette Extraordinary on 5.5.50. The report divided S.W.A. into six Parliamentary constituencies - Windhoek, Middelland, Omaruru, Etosha, Karas and Namib. Each of these was sub-divided into three Legislative Assembly constituencies. *Rand Daily Mail*, 5.8.50, p. 7. The South-West Africa Affairs Amendment Act entitled Delimitation Commissions in the territory to load or unload constituencies by up to 15 per cent. *Daily News*, 11.4.49, p. 2. In the Delimitation report of 5.5.50 there was a 'slight loading' in the Northern and Central areas. The less populous south, the region where the U.N.S.W.P. was most sure of its support, was unloaded. *Rand Daily Mail*, 6.5.50, p. 9.
 52. CAP, JGS, Vol. 153, No. 6, Notule van Hoofbestuur Vergadering, 5.9.49.
 53. *Rand Daily Mail*, 11.4.50, p. 9.
 54. *The Star*, 26.5.50, p. 3. The delegation included P.W. Botha, Chief Organiser of the H.N.P. in the Cape Province and H.H. Smit, Editor of *Die Kruithoring*. *Ibid.*
 55. *Ibid.*
 56. Four of the N.P.S.W.A. Parliamentary candidates were farmers, one a businessman and one a N.P.S.W.A. secretary. Three of the U.N.S.W.P. candidates were journalists, one an ex-magistrate and two were advocates. *Rand Daily Mail*, 38.8.50.
 57. *The Star*, 7.7.50, p. 9.
 58. *Daily News*, 13.7.50, p. 4. Havenga took no direct part in the campaigning in S.W.A. as he left the Union in mid-August 1950 in order to attend the Paris talks of the International Monetary Fund. *The Star*, 26.6.50, p. 9.
 59. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A., Vol. I, Correspondence and Reports 1949-1969. Report on South-West Elections, Senator H. Tucker, 29.7.50.

Parliament. He observed that the 'Nats are following their usual tactics - colour questions and communism are in the forefront of their campaign.'⁶⁰ The H.N.P. was in fact sending trained questioners from the Union to S.W.A. in order to ensure that these issues became the main theme at public meetings.⁶¹ Thrown onto the defensive the U.P.'s less than adequate immediate response was to prepare pamphlets for distribution in the territory explaining into continued commitment to white exclusivity despite the objections its spokesmen had made to the Mixed Marriages, Immorality, Population Registration, Suppression of Communism and Group Areas Acts.⁶² More effective, at least in terms of the additional coverage it received, was the Party's decision to arrange, at its own expense, for the publication of the U.N.S.W.P. supporting *Suid-Wes Afrikaner* as a bi-weekly instead of as a weekly paper during the two weeks prior to the election.⁶³

Despite the apparent effectiveness of the N.P.S.W.A. propaganda campaign, much of it funnelled through the Party controlled weekly *Die Suidwester*, the H.N.P., for its part, took the precaution of arranging for the distribution of *Die Burger* in S.W.A. free of charge during the two months leading up to the election.⁶⁴ Moreover, in response to the inconsistency, which the U.P. and U.N.S.W.P. did not fail to point out, between its strong anti-Communist stance and its reluctance actively to support the United Nations military intervention in South Korea because of fear that that organisation might eventually also 'intervene strongly in such questions as the status of South-West Africa,'⁶⁵ the S.A. Government, on 4 August 1950, belatedly decided to send an airforce squadron to that country.⁶⁶

Of considerable assistance in strengthening the position of the N.P.S.W.A. was the U.P.'s inability to shake loose of the accusation that it had opposed the retention of control, by the S.W. African Legislative Assembly, of its own financial affairs. In August 1950 the Party vainly attempted to repair the damage by going onto the offensive. Referring to the H.N.P.'s determination to remove 'Coloured' voting rights, it reiterated, in a Party Letter, that it regarded the clause allowing S.W.A. to control its own finances, 'as an Entrenched Clause and, as such, is as sacred as the Entrenched Clauses in the Act of Union... The people of South-West Africa have no guarantee that the Nationalist Party [sic] will respect this Entrenched Clause.'⁶⁷

More serious, though, was the U.N.S.W.P.'s inability, in view of its and the U.P.'s internment and deportation policy during and immediately after the war, to attract support from German-speaking S.W. Africans. Although only 244 Germans were finally listed for deportation before the Smuts Government's 1948 fall from power, far more, in fact, had been directly affected. Not only had 1 700 German speakers been interned⁶⁸ but the cases of 5 270 individuals, significantly over one-third of the 13 000 strong German-speaking population, had been reviewed by the Deportation Commission since its appointment in March 1946.⁶⁹ A July 1950 note to the U.P. head office from a U.N.S.W.P. worker pointed out that the N.P. in the territory, in order to exploit the issue to its own best advantage, had launched 'a vitriolic campaign, using the antagonism shown towards the Germans during the war as their main weapon. They are dragging out every bit and every thing which has ever been said against the Germans...'⁷⁰

On the other hand, soon after coming to power, the new Government had not only rescinded its predecessor's deportation orders⁷¹ but had also encouraged both emigration from Germany to South Africa and the adoption of German war orphans by white South Africans. Malan himself set the example in the latter

60. *Ibid.*

61. *The Star*, 6.7.50, p. 3.

62. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A., Vol. I, Correspondence and Reports 1949-1969, Report on South-West Elections, Senator H. Tucker, 29.7.50.

63. *Ibid.* The English Language U.N.S.W.P. supporting newspaper was *The Windhoek Advertiser*.

64. *Ibid.* Election Campaign 1950, Impressions, C.G. van den Berg. n.d.

65. *Rand Daily Mail*, 7.8.50, p. 4.

66. *The Forum*, 19.8.50, p. 6.

67. CAP, JCS, Vol. 389/3. Party Letter to U.P. Speakers participating in S.W.A. Election Campaign, 8.8.50.

68. *Rand Daily Mail*, 30.8.50, p. 1.

69. CAP, JCS, Vol. 389/3, General Election, Party Letter No. 5, Deportation of German Nazis, 10.4.47.

70. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A. Vol. I, Correspondence and Reports 1949-1969, I. Carroll - O.A. Oosthuizen, 12.7.50.

71. *Rand Daily Mail*, 26.4.50, p. 9.

regard.⁷² In addition, at the end of April 1949, it appointed Dr H.H. Vedder, superintendent of the Rhenish Mission in S.W.A. and the most prominent leader of the German-speaking community, as one of the territory's nominated Senators.⁷³ Three months later it introduced the South African Citizenship Bill, a Bill which proposed, amongst its other provisions, the denial of Commonwealth status to Union nationals. Its successful passage through Parliament removed a major objection of those South-West African Germans who had been de-naturalised during the war to re-accepting South African citizenship.⁷⁴ One of the reasons the election was held as late as it was, was to enable as many Germans as possible to become re-naturalised.⁷⁵ The biggest increases in voting strength between September 1949 and July 1950 occurred, in fact, in those areas of the territory which had large German-speaking communities.⁷⁶

In a public display of confidence in its ability to attract the support of the German speaking population the U.N.S.W.P., in its Election Manifesto, guaranteed the German-speaking population's language rights, undertook to re-introduce German-medium instruction up to Std 6,⁷⁷ reassured them that repatriation was a dead letter and welcomed 'the co-operation of the German section in the constructive work that lies ahead.'⁷⁸ Privately, although German speakers had given little overt indication of their political affiliation, having made no attempt to resuscitate the pre-war *Deutsche Bund* and seldom having attended election meetings,⁷⁹ the Party's officials remained realistically pessimistic in regard to support from them.⁸⁰

Together with the lack of support from German-speakers, the U.N.S.W.P. had also to labour under the burden of negative developments within the U.P. itself. Not only had J.G.N. Strauss, in June 1950, been less than enthusiastically elected parliamentary leader of the Party after Smuts's incapacitation by illness⁸¹ but, in August, the Cape Attorney General issued a damning report on the U.P. controlled publishing company Unie-Volkspers. The report, which was given wide publicity in S.W.A. by *Die Burger*,⁸² revealed not only maladministration but also the fact that the company had, between 1947 and 1949, been issuing fraudulent circulation figures for its publications in an effort to obtain higher advertising revenue.⁸³

Nor was the U.N.S.W.P. helped when, in July 1950, the International Court of Justice at The Hague refocused attention on the status of S.W.A. by ruling that the League of Nations Mandate was still valid and that the South African Government was, therefore, obliged to continue to submit annual reports on the territory to the U.N.⁸⁴ In mid-August Malan reinforced his Party's electorally popular refusal to submit such reports by instructing high ranking officers in the Union Defence Force to visit S.W.A. ostensibly to discuss the protection of Walvis Bay with the Minister of Defence, F.C. Erasmus, who was, at that time, campaigning in

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72. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A., Vol. I, Election Campaign 1950, B. Swemmer - J.L. Horak, 12.9.50.
 73. *Rand Daily Mail*, 26.4.50, p. 9. The other appointee was M.C. van Rensburg, Chairman of the N.P.S.W.A. Congress.
 74. *Cape Argus*, 16.6.49, p. 1.
 75. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A., Vol. I, Correspondence and Reports 1949-1969, G.J. Labuschagne - O.A. Oosthuizen, 29.8.49.
 76. *Rand Daily Mail*, 11.7.50, p. 9. Luderitz, Swakopmund, Windhoek, Okahandja, Grootfontein, Karibib and Omaruru. *Ibid.*
 77. German-medium instruction had been suspended during the war. The Malan Government undertook to appoint a committee to investigate the possibility of introducing German-medium instruction for those who desired it up to standard ten. *Rand Daily Mail*, 11.4.50, p. 9.
 78. CAP, JCS, Vol. 389/1, Manifesto, U.N.S.W.P., n.d.
 79. *Cape Argus*, 18.8.50, p. 9. The local German language newspaper did however favour the N.P.S.W.A. *Ibid.*
 80. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A., Vol. I, Correspondence and Reports 1949-1969, G.J. Labuschagne - O.A. Oosthuizen, 6.8.49.
 81. W.B. White, Parliamentary Opposition, pp. 184-192.
 82. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A., Election Campaign 1950, Impressions, C.G. van den Berg, n.d.
 83. *Ibid.*, Unie-Volkspers Correspondence 1947-1955, Report of the Judicial Managers, 18.8.50.
 84. B.M. Schoeman, *Parlementêre verkiesings in Suid Afrika, 1910-1976* (Pretoria, 1977), p. 309.

the territory.⁸⁵

A bed-ridden Smuts, in his response to the Court's judgement, remained more circumspect than Malan had been. In a message personally conveyed by Strauss to S.W.A., Smuts, after reiterating his Party's opposition to U.N. trusteeship over the territory, then went on, in what was inevitably seen as a concession to international opinion, to argue that annual reports should nevertheless continue to be submitted.⁸⁶ Attempting defensively to deflect attention away from the issue, Smuts put to the acid test the essence of his Party's electoral platform when he continued: 'The United National South-West Party, like its namesake in the Union, refuses to base its appeal to the electorate on racial ties or ties of blood. It makes its appeal on a social and economic programme...' The U.N.S.W.P.'s attempt to convey this approach at large meetings in towns during the final two days of the campaign was forestalled, however, when the N.P.S.W.A., in a final display of its greater efficiency, reserved practically all of the few available halls, hotels and boarding houses for its own use.⁸⁸

5. The election results

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, Smuts, at the end of what had been by general acknowledgement a cleanly fought election campaign,⁸⁹ was informed by U.P. workers in S.W.A. 'that all was going well and that there were hopeful signs of the Germans coming over to us.'⁹⁰ It was, at the same time, reported that the U.P. Head Office had also been receiving optimistic reports from S.W.A.⁹¹ It was possibly for this reason that O.A. Oosthuizen, General Secretary of the U.P., despite the danger of making predictions on the outcome of an election where the majority in each of the seats was not likely to be more than two to three hundred votes, made the same error of judgement he had made prior to the May 1948 General Election.⁹² He believed, he wrote,

that at last we would have the opportunity of demonstrating that the Malan Government was on its way out. Strauss had a personal triumph at all his meetings in S. West. These good meetings gave us much satisfaction. Then came the devastating results...⁹³

For the S.W.A. Legislative Assembly, the N.P.S.W.A., in a remarkable 94 per cent poll,⁹⁴ drew 12 349 votes and won fifteen seats.⁹⁵ It gained one seat for every 823 votes cast for it. The U.N.S.W.P.

85. *Daily News*, 19.8.50, p. 7.

86. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A. Elections and Impressions, B. Swemmer - J.L. Horak, 12.9.50. Although he submitted a report on South Africa's administration of S.W.A. to the Trusteeship Committee in 1946, Smuts made it clear that this was done voluntarily and for the purpose of information only. I. Goldblatt, *South West Africa*, p. 250.

UPA, O.A. Oosthuizen Papers (OAO), General Elections, General Smuts's Message to the Electors of S.W.A., n.d.

88. *The Star*, 23.8.50, p. 1.

89. *Cape Argus*, 28.8.50, p. 1.

90. UPA, UP, Central Head Office, S.W.A., Vol. I, S.W.A. Elections, C.G. van den Berg, n.d.

91. UPA, C. Miles Warren Papers, Narrative, n.d.

92. On the eve of that election Oosthuizen had written: 'Everything according to all our reports, is set to bring us a smashing victory at the polls. Our figures are consistently good and the electorate will more than confirm our conservative estimate of 85 seats.' UPA, OAO, Typed Version of Diary, 25.5.48, p. 17.

93. *Ibid.*, 2.9.50. On the same day the H.N.P. won the Klerksdorp Provincial by-election with an increased majority of 199 votes over the 1949 result. *Die Transvaler*, 1.9.50, p. 1.

94. *Cape Argus*, 1.9.50, p. 1.

95. The Parliamentary election was held under the aegis of the Union Administration and the Legislative Assembly election under that of the S.W.A. Administration. Each voter received two ballot papers. There were eighty polling stations. *Rand Daily Mail*, 5.8.50, p. 7.

drew 10 047 votes and won three seats,⁹⁶ one for every 3 449 votes cast for it. For the Union Parliament 12 434 votes, 55,3 percent of the total, went to the N.P.S.W.A. It won six seats, one for every 2 072 votes cast for it. The U.N.S.W.P. drew 10 033 votes, fourteen less than its Assembly candidates had drawn, but won no seats.⁹⁷ The Government's House of Assembly majority rose, therefore, from seven to thirteen.⁹⁸ Two days after the election the Administrator of S.W.A. summoned the members of the Legislative Assembly and the six new members of the Union Parliament to meet as an electoral college on 28 September 1950 to elect the additional S.W. African Senators.⁹⁹ The N.P.S.W.A.'s overwhelming majority in the electoral college made an increase in the Government's Senate majority by two inevitable.¹⁰⁰

6. The aftermath

The U.N.S.W.P. was, as a result of the election, 'skielik van 'n magtige regerende party tot 'n nietige Oposisiesparty omgeskep.'¹⁰¹ The consensus of opinion among opposition supporting newspapers was to lay the blame for the Party's defeat at the door of the territory's German-speaking electorate.¹⁰² While not without substance the accuracy of that opinion needs to be qualified by the fact that the vote of German-speakers was very likely decisive in only four of the six parliamentary constituencies.¹⁰³ U.P. and U.N.S.W.P. spokesmen had themselves, prior to the election, conceded that even if the bulk of German-speakers voted, the U.N.S.W.P. stood a reasonable chance of winning at least two parliamentary seats.¹⁰⁴ With little prospect of winning over that 15 per cent of the territory's electorate made up of German-speakers, the Party's failure to win those two seats brought into acute focus the difficulty it faced for it could only hope to secure parliamentary representation by winning over to its side marginal Afrikaans-speaking supporters of the N.P.S.W.A.

This challenge, which confronted the U.N.S.W.P. with an obvious policy dilemma, mirrored that faced by the U.P. in the Union. Seizing hold of the issue, Government supporting newspapers immediately launched a campaign after the election to discredit Strauss. A leader in *Die Burger* noted: 'It is the Platteland Afrikaner vote in relation to which Mr Strauss has been described by his critics as comparatively impotent. And it is that vote in the main that he is confronting in S.W.A.'¹⁰⁵

Stretching the bounds of credibility by denying the taunt U.P. supporters, in response, put on a brave face by publicly rallying behind their leader. Although the benefit was to prove entirely ephemeral, Strauss' position within the Party was further strengthened by the discrediting of Colin Steyn, Orange Free State leader of the U.P. and former contender for the Party's leadership. Steyn, as had been the case during the 1949 Provincial elections, had, due to unspecified 'personal reasons,' taken no part in the S.W.A. election campaign.¹⁰⁶

96. Rehoboth, Windhoek-East and Swakopmund. *Die Transvaler*, 1.8.50, p. 1

97. UPA, UP, Division of Information, Newsletter, - 10.50, p. 2.

98.	H.N.P.	-	76	U.P.	-	63
	A.P.	-	9	L.P.	-	6
			85	N.Reps.	-	<u>3</u>
						72

Vacant seats De Aar, Colesberg and Turffontein.

Cape Argus, 1.9.50, p. 3.

99. *Daily News*, 2.9.50, p. 7.

100. Composition of the Senate, October 1950 : Government 27, Opposition 21.

101. *Die Transvaler*, 1.9.50, p. 1.

102. *Rand Daily Mail*, 2.9.50, p. 4.

103. Etosha, Windhoek, Namib and Omaruru. The U.N.S.W.P. lost these seats by 846, 234, 441 and 584 votes respectively. P.S. Joubert, *Partypolitieke Groepering*, p. 283.

104. *Rand Daily Mail*, 26.4.50, p. 9 and 31.8.50, p. 1. The two constituencies were Midlands and Karas. The former was lost by 229 votes and the latter by 67. P.S. Joubert, *Partypolitieke Groepering*, p. 283.

105. Quoted in *The Forum*, 9.9.50, p. 6.

106. *Ibid.*

The superficial consolidation of Strauss' position at the helm of the U.P. could not, however, conceal the fundamental weakness of both the U.P. and U.N.S.W.P. *vis à vis* their political opponents. Lacking an ethnic base and a formal membership, neither of the parties had been able to match the professionalism of either the H.N.P. or N.P.S.W.A. - tightly organised, ideological parties in close touch with their grassroots support. Referring specifically to the U.P., de Villiers Graaff M.P. reported that U.N.S.W.P. workers had complained that, unlike those in the H.N.P.

Many of the M.P.s and M.P.C.s sent from the Union had little or no idea about organisation, knew nothing about intensive 'huisbesoek' and were not prepared to ask Nationalist speakers questions at meetings.¹⁰⁷

Just as threatening to both the U.P. and U.N.S.W.P.'s future political viability was the extent to which the election campaign in S.W.A. had revealed the additional advantage the N.P. and N.P.S.W.A. possessed in controlling a viable regional press which was an integral part of the party machine. Besides the ability this gave the parties to launch short, sharp campaigns focused upon specific issues¹⁰⁸ it also enabled them effectively to co-ordinate pamphlet distribution with such campaigns. After having investigated the U.P.'s and U.N.S.W.P.'s shortcomings in the latter regard a U.P. report noted that the Party's

propaganda-veldtog in Suidwes het totaal in duie gestort...Deur die Nasionaliste is elke belangrike verwikkeling gedurende die eleksie, tot vlak voor stemdag, in treffende, goedversorgde pamflette uitgebuit. In hierdie opsig het ons vër tekort geskiet.¹⁰⁹

But, if the U.P. and U.N.S.W.P. had been shocked by the election results, so too had the A.P. *The Forum* commented that the Party, no longer holding the balance of power, found itself 'in a ludicrous and pitiable plight.'¹¹⁰ It was true that the results of the 1949 Provincial Elections had already shown that the H.N.P. would very likely survive a General Election as the governing party without an alliance with the A.P.¹¹¹ and that Havenga's permission, soon after those elections, for the A.P. in S.W.A. to unite with the N.P.S.W.A. had provided a clear indication of what he felt the ultimate fate of his Party in the Union would be. It was, however, the extent of the N.P.S.W.A. victory and the subsequent *volte face* of one of his Party's M.P.'s on the Coloured vote issue, an action which raised the spectre of further defections,¹¹² which forced Havenga to make concessions to his coalition partner sooner and with less return than he would probably have liked. In a joint statement issued on 13 October 1950, he and Malan announced that agreement had been reached between their respective parties on the separate representation of the Coloured electorate.¹¹³ Five days later Malan announced the appointment of the A.P.'s J.H. Viljoen as Minister of Mines, Education, Arts and Science.¹¹⁴ The subsequent merging of the two parties on 22 October 1951 was simply a logical conclusion to these developments.

7. Conclusion

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107. UPA, UP, S.W.A. Report, de Villiers Graaff to J.L. Horak, 18.9.50.
 108. W.B. White, *The United Party's Afrikaans-language press, 1948-1953*, *Kleio*, XXIV (1992), p. 70.
 109. *Ibid.*
 110. *The Forum*, 9.9.50, p. 6.
 111. W.B. White, *Parliamentary opposition*, p. 132.
 112. D.M. Scher, *The disenfranchisement of Coloured voters, 1948-1956* (Unpub. D. Litt et Phil. thesis, Unisa, 1985), p. 166.
 113. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
 114. *The Star*, 19.10.50, p. 10. In June 1950 Malan had offered the Governor Generalship to Havenga. *Sunday Times*, 18.6.50, p. 1. Upon his refusal, Dr E.G. Jansen, Minister of Native Affairs, was appointed to the office.

The 2 percent decline in support for the U.N.S.W.P. which the April 1953 General Election revealed¹¹⁵ merely served to confirm what the August 1950 election in the territory had already shown. Hobbled by the alienation of German-speakers from it as a consequence of the fact that the Party had specifically been brought into being in 1927 as a means of marginalising German-speaking representation in the Legislative Assembly and because of the Party's war-time policy towards them, the U.N.S.W.P. was to prove as incapable of consolidating and expanding its majority support among the remainder of the territory's electorate as the U.P. was to be in translating into parliamentary representation its majority support among the Union's electorate. Just as the U.P., condemned to opposition status by its large but wasted majorities, recognised that its path to power lay through whatever inroads it could make among Afrikaans-speakers in marginal constituencies, so too was the U.N.S.W.P. condemned to a fruitless attempt to construct a platform which would continue to hold its traditional constituency while, at the same time, proving attractive enough to sufficient numbers of N.P.S.W.A. supporters to win it power. The contradictions implicit in its attempts to do so exacted an inevitable price. Not only did it never win any of the parliamentary seats allocated to S.W.A., but the Legislative Assembly elections which took place in 1955, 1961, 1966 and 1970 resulted in U.N.S.W.P. representation in that body progressively diminishing and ultimately disappearing altogether.¹¹⁶

115. P.S. Joubert, *Partypolitieke Groepering*, p. 284.
 S.W.A.: *Votes received*
 N.P.S.W.A. 13 305
 U.N.S.W.P. 10 021
 majority 3 284
 percentage of total vote 57,3 percent
 1950 N.P.S.W.A. majority 2 401
Ibid.

116. I. Goldblatt, 'South West Africa', p. 245.