Bread and Honour: White Working Class Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s

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Abstract

Women have occupied a central place in the ideological formulations of nationalist movements. In particular, the figure of woman as mother recurs throughout the history of nationalist political mobilizations. In Afrikaner nationalism, this symbolic female identity takes the form of the volksmoeder (mother of the nation) icon, commonly assumed to describe a highly circumscribed set of women's social roles, created for women by men. The academic orthodoxy holds that middle-class Afrikaner women submitted to the volksmoeder ideology early on in the development of Afrikaner nationalism but that the working class Afrikaner women of the Garment Workers' Union (GWU) represented an enclave of resistance to dominant definitions of ethnic identity. They chose instead to ally themselves with militant, class-conscious trade unionism. This paper argues that Afrikaner women of different classes helped to shape the contours of the volksmoeder icon. Whilst middle class Afrikaner women questioned the idea that their social contribution should remain restricted to narrow familial and charitable concerns, prominent working class women laid claim to their own entitlement to the volksmoeder heritage. In doing so, the latter contributed to the popularization and reinterpretation of an ideology that was at this time seeking a wider audience. The paper argues that the incorporation of Afrikaner women into the socialist milieu of the GWU did not result in these women simply discarding the ethnic components of their identity. Rather their self-awareness as Afrikaner women with a recent rural past was grafted onto their new experience as urban factory workers. The way in which leading working class Afrikaner women articulated this potent combination of 'derived' and 'inherent' ideology cannot be excluded from the complex process whereby Afrikaner nationalism achieved success as a movement appealing to its imagined community across boundaries of class and gender.

Introduction

No beard grows upon my cheeks But in my heart I carry a sword The battle sword for bread and honour Against the poverty which pains my mother heart.(1)

The transition to industrial capitalism in South Africa saw significant changes in the economic role of women. A rapidly expanding commercial and secondary industrial sector offered new opportunities for white women to enter the labour market. For many, this was necessitated by the loss of other means of subsistence as a result of the commercialization of agriculture.(2) The escalating impoverishment of South Africa's rural white population in the years after World War I triggered a rapid exodus to the
Many of the new arrivals in the cities were Afrikaners whose past working experience on the farms ill-equipped them for urban employment. In 1920, just over 21,000 white male applicants sought employment at labour bureaux. In 1926, that figure had increased to over 53,000 and to almost 190,000 in 1933. As men battled to find jobs in the cities and people on the land found it more difficult to make a living, it frequently fell to women to seek work themselves in order to secure their own survival and that of their families.

Between 1900 and 1930, women's participation in the labour market rose steadily. They represented between fourteen and fifteen per cent of the industrial labour force in 1924/25. This figure had increased to 25 per cent by 1938, despite the Depression. Union Yearbook figures show that there were close to 90,000 white women engaged in recognized forms of employment outside of the home by 1926. This included 14,000 teachers, almost 4,000 in the civil service (excluding professional posts and typists), 1,900 nurses, over 600 religious workers, 15,000-16,000 clerks and typists, 14,000 in the service industry, close to 8,000 in business and over 4,000 in agriculture. According to census figures, fifteen per cent of all white women in the country worked outside the home by 1926. One of the key areas in which they managed to find employment was in South Africa's burgeoning manufacturing sector and in the clothing industry in particular.

Within South Africa's emerging racially discriminatory industrial relations legislation, the removal of Africans from certain forms of employment through job colour bar policies went hand-in-hand with the granting of economic concessions to white workers and the institutionalization of white trade unions on a racially discriminatory basis. The differential treatment of black and white workers undermined the prospects for cross-colour class identification. It was in this context that, in the 1930s, the Garment Workers' Union of the Transvaal (GWU), with a membership consisting predominantly of Afrikaner women, emerged as a powerful voice in the South African labour movement.

The Witwatersrand Tailors' Association (WTA), a union of male tailoring workers which would later become the GWU, was founded in 1913. Initially, the union's main concern was the possibility of the position of male tailors being undercut by the employment of cheap female labour. On 14 November 1928, Emil Solomon (Solly) Sachs was elected General Secretary of the WTA, heralding a new era for the union. Sachs had arrived in South Africa from Latvia at the end of 1913 and in 1919 became active in the Reef Shop Assistants' Union, agitating for shorter working hours. He joined the Young Communist League in 1922 whilst at university. By 1930, Sachs was on the Central Committee of the Communist Party. A year later, however, he was expelled in a purge which would leave the party that had once numbered 3,000 with only 150 members.

Sachs was left to concentrate his efforts on his union activities and to put into practice his belief that working class unity rather than 'race' should be emphasized, and that a progressive role could be played by white workers. Under Sachs, a new constitution for the WTA was adopted in July 1929 and the name was changed to the Garment Workers' Union in 1930. The union had a membership of 1,700, two thirds of whom were factory workers. Although the majority of factory workers were Afrikaans-speaking women,
the union was dominated by higher-paid male tailors and there were no women on its central committee.(9)

The transformation of the GWU began with the attempt to address the problem of employers who violated industrial council agreements. Sachs began to make frequent use of both the courts and the strike weapon to secure better working conditions and higher wages for his members. The 1930s saw significant gains made by the union in securing workers' rights. By 1938, membership had swelled to almost 7,000. The average wage of women workers in the industry almost doubled from around 23 shillings per week in 1928 to over two pounds per week in 1938.(11) The union won for its members rest intervals in the morning and afternoon, ten days paid leave instead of only three days and a 'sick fund' was established. Soon the major office-bearers were all Afrikaner women with Anna Scheepers as President, Maggie Kruger as Vice-President, Johanna Cornelius as National Organizer and Dulcie Hartwell as Assistant Secretary (Hester Cornelius, Secretary of the Germiston branch was another influential figure).(13)

By 1936, the garment workers had founded their own mouthpiece, The Garment Worker, and its Afrikaans-language counterpart, Die Klerewerker. Along with magazines such as Die Boerevrou, launched in 1919 under the editorship of National Party-supporter Mabel Malherbe, and Die Huisvrou, published in Cape Town from 1922 under the editorship of Minnie Donovan, this was one of only a handful of Afrikaans-language publications which addressed a largely female audience. While the main aim of the magazine was to popularize the union's message among its membership and while Sachs played a dominant editorial role, its pages also provided working-class Afrikaner women with a rare opportunity to articulate their views.

The magazine's first editorial clearly set out the aims of the union. It would take forward the fight of garment workers throughout South Africa 'for a decent standard of wages, for bread and butter, for a happier life and brighter future for the masses of working men and women'.(14) The magazine itself aimed to deal with the vital questions affecting all workers, paying special attention to workers' education and 'explaining to them the immediate and distant causes of their misery and suffering'.(15) The GWU thus attempted to provide both material and ideological support for the development of a strong working class identity among its members:

To insure the continued loyalty of working-class women, and to try to minimise their distance from their own families and kin, union leaders sought to redefine the bonds of ethnicity in class-oriented terms. This effort formed part of a broad-based left-wing effort to expand the boundaries of unionism to include larger numbers of women ....(16)

The GWU thus attempted to provide both material and ideological support for the development of a strong working class identity amongst its members. However, the union was not the only ideological contender for the hearts and minds of urban working class Afrikaner women. The decade of the 1930s also saw strikes defeated, the rise of the fascist 'shirt movements' in South Africa and the growing influence of Afrikaner nationalism. The garment workers therefore had available to them several alternative explanations for the causes of their distress. The period emerges as one of contestation
for the hearts and minds of working class Afrikaner women. The terrain upon which this battle was fought was Afrikaner nationalism's gender ideology encapsulated in the notion of the volksmoeder.

The Garment Workers and Afrikaner Nationalism

Nationalist ideologies frequently fashion a distinct set of roles for their female subjects. While these roles offer women a highly circumscribed range of social choices, they are also usually associated with esteem, status and respectability. In Afrikaner nationalism the role model which was crafted for Afrikaner women was that of the volksmoeder, an icon which began to take shape with the emergence of a new Dutch/Afrikaner literature in South Africa in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Van der Loo's De Geschiedenis der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek aan Het Volk (The History of the South African Republic and her People), for example, 'lavished praise on Boer women. Despite their contact with "wild barbarians", and their isolation from civilisation, they remained true to their traditions of "virtue, moral sensibility, political independence and free institutions"'.(17)

Women continued to feature prominently in the explosion of Afrikaans literature which emerged during the early part of the twentieth-century and which came to be known as the Tweede Taal Beweging (Second Language Movement).(18) In the literature of the Tweede Taal Beweging, the Great Trek, the Battle of Blood River and the South African War were favourite subjects. Tough and self-sufficient, the legendary Voortrekker women who acted as teachers, doctors, nurses and soldiers during the Great Trek were held up as the embodiment of all the essential volksmoeder traits.(19) Writers such as C. J. Langenhoven(20) and Willem Postma(21) portrayed the Afrikaner woman as religious, freedom-loving, honourable, selfless and incorruptible.

In the original or 'orthodox' version of the volksmoeder ideology, the Afrikaner woman's highest calling and greatest fulfilment was to be found in her own home where she would physically and morally reproduce the nation.(22) However, the ideology did not remain restricted to this form. In the context of the growing concern in Afrikaner nationalism with poor whiteism, the emphasis on the individual family shifted to the role which women could play in the project of uplifting the nation's poor. Initially, it was expected that Afrikaner women would exercise the public dimension of their role as volksmoeders solely by way of charity work in Afrikaner welfare organizations such as the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging (ACVV).(23) Afrikaner women's involvement in welfare organizations has frequently been interpreted as further evidence of their unquestioning subservience to the nationalist cause. However, as Marijke Du Toit has shown in her detailed study of the ACVV, while the organization, for example, clearly set itself against the female suffrage and had narrowly gender-specific ideas about the sorts of educational opportunities which should be made available to women, it played a pioneering role in 'claiming a legitimate place for women in public. While ACVV women carefully distanced themselves from movements that rejected male authority, they were still challenging conservative notions of women's role.'(24)
The new, dual emphasis on women as mothers, not only of their own families but of all their people, held huge possibilities for women to engage in a wide range of projects outside of the private sphere of the home. It was only at the level of mythical nationalist precepts that the category of 'Afrikaner woman' was homogenous. For their part, Afrikaner women saw themselves in much more diverse terms than is usually imagined. Although it has frequently been assumed that Afrikaner women accepted a gender identity which 'to a large extent become synonymous with motherhood',(25) the challenge to the original outlines of the volksmoeder ideology included even the question of motherhood itself. In the context of extremely high infant and maternal mortality figures, the idea that marriage and motherhood was their sole calling, was less than palatable to many women. Prominent Afrikaner women began to argue, for example in the women's pages of the popular Afrikaans magazine, Die Huisgenoot, that, in contrast to their elevated portrayal in the volksmoeder discourse, life for many women consisted of suffering and self-neglect. Marriage was seen as synonymous with surrendering their own independent existence, their own personality, tastes and talents. Men who risked their lives to take the lives of others were hailed as fallen heroes, but 'for the woman who risks her life to create a new life, there is not a single penny in the state's coffers'.(26)

The reduction of women's personae to an unswerving commitment to motherhood and domestic labour came under further pressure as significant numbers of women entered both the professions and the factories. Poorer women were particularly disenchanted with the idea of a life devoted to childbirth:

It is sometimes regarded as admirable that twelve or sixteen children in as short a time as possible are born in a family; but the question always arises for me: what is the point of a large number of births if half or more succumb within the first year of life? What squandering of the mother's energy, what sorrow to have to give up one little child after another because they did not have the strength to carry on.(27)

The image of the hard-working but refined housewife-cum-charity worker that the Afrikaner woman as volksmoeder was intended to conjure was far removed from the reality of the young, single, newly-urbanized Afrikaner woman who found herself employed in South Africa's clothing industry in the 1920s and 1930s. On 26 February 1926, the Minister of Labour instructed the Wage Board to investigate conditions in several industries including the clothing industry. The Board's report of September 1926 noted that the circumstances under which many employees in these industries had to live was 'saddening in the extreme'. The Board was informed that with no parents or friends to assist them, many young Afrikaner women could only survive on their wages by boarding at establishments where they slept three in a bed and lived on dry bread and black coffee.(28)

Explaining why she had left her rural home to work in a factory, garment worker Johanna Cornelius described how life on the farm had grown increasingly difficult. By the age of eighteen she was compelled to abandon ideas of further study and to travel instead to Johannesburg to earn her own living. Here conditions were far worse than she had anticipated:
How proud I was on receiving my first week's wages. So proud indeed, that I wrote home telling my father that he now had one mouth less to feed .... I thought I would be able to save a sufficiently large sum to enable me to continue my studies. But to my sorrow and disappointment, I found that the money was not even sufficient to permit me to live a civilised life.(29)

After Cornelius had been working for only a few months, the depression of 1930-1932 began to be felt in the clothing industry. Like many other workers, she was given her 'yellow ticket' which meant that after one more week of work, she would receive no more wages. At this time she was sharing a room with two fellow workers, only one of whom had been given notice:

What could we do now? We had no money to take us home, the instalments on the few pieces of furniture we possessed had to be paid, we could expect no financial help from home because the depression had hit the farmers equally hard as industry and our parents were in the same boat as ourselves. We stayed on and had to eat less food, and lived on practically nothing until we all got ill.(30)

Far from evoking sympathy in middle-class Afrikaner circles, however, female factory workers were regarded as morally suspect, as an incident reported in The Garment Worker illustrates. A meeting was held in Belgravia to discuss the building of a boarding house for working women. To the surprise of the garment workers who attended, the meeting was packed with middle class members of the Belgravia neighbourhood who had compiled a petition containing 250 signatures in opposition to the plan to build the boarding house. The signatories commented that 'you want to make a second Sophiatown [an African township] of Belgravia, by building these hostels there. How would you like to live right in front of a hostel for factory girls?' They argued that the hostel would affect the value of their properties and that the high standards of the area would be placed in jeopardy by the presence of these workers.(31)

In similar vein prominent nationalist ideologues such as Dr J. D. Kestell(32) argued in the national press on a regular basis that it was wrong for women to leave the farms and go to the urban areas. The idea that the rural way of life was intrinsic to Afrikanerdom was widely held. The cities were seen to be full of moral threat and the danger of Anglicization. These fears were summed up, as Dunbar Moodie put it, 'in the reverberating cry of back to the land'.(33) Recently urbanized young women living in slum conditions in the backyards of Johannesburg's suburbs and removed from familial ties were seen as a threat to the ideological and racial 'purity' of the volk.

But leading women in the GWU challenged the relevance of an understanding of the contemporary role of Afrikaner women that attempted to confine itself to a rural idyll that was fast being overtaken in a rapidly changing world. Thus Johanna Cornelius wrote: 'As an Afrikaner woman, I disagree with the sentiments expressed by Dr Kestell.' For Cornelius, the idealization of a past way of life was all very well, but she and her fellow workers had little choice but to cope with the reality of the present circumstances of their day-to-day lives:
I and thousands of my fellow working women in the factories are moved by bread and butter problems and cannot become sentimental about the beauties of the countryside. I am not afraid of the towns nor of the march of progress. What is best in the traditions of my people, I shall always carry forward, not being content with lamentations about our people, but by carrying on the fight for our rights which the Voortrekkers started.(34)

Thus, rather than rejecting ethnic identity outright, those garment workers who sought to be recognized as Afrikaners argued that their fight for a better life was in fact in the very best tradition of Afrikanerdom. The embracing of an ethnic identity has been interpreted by some commentators in terms of the garment workers having 'succumbed to the powerful prescriptions of the volksmoeder ideology.(35) This, however, is to render working class women powerless in the face of the onslaught of ideology and to overlook the extent to which they actively engaged with the volksmoeder idea. In so doing, they helped reinterpret the ideology in ways that held an appeal for precisely the working class female constituency which Afrikaner nationalism was beginning to woo.

While few commentators would seek to dispute the fact that, as recent arrivals in the towns, ethnicity and religion formed the foundation for the garment workers' identity, nationalist organizations are sometimes perceived as having had little to offer these women beyond 'a narrow and defensive ethnic consciousness'.(36) The nationalist message is presented as a set of 'convoluted formulations', which generated little interest.(37) Yet, the idealized depiction of Afrikaner womanhood symbolized by the volksmoeder icon was in many senses a very attractive one, particularly to women whose social standing was somewhat shaky. Women had been given a central place in the most significant historical memories of Afrikaner nationalism. Unsurprisingly, working class Afrikaner women did not readily surrender the image of themselves as resourceful, proud and morally unimpeachable. Leading Afrikaner women in the GWU were at pains to show how the positive characteristics associated with the traditional volksmoeder image were just as applicable to their new lives as factory workers.(38) Johanna Cornelius, for example, declared that she considered herself a better Afrikaner than all those learned yolk who deplored her way of life so much but did not lift a finger to improve things. She too loved the culture, the traditions and the language of her Afrikaner yolk but refused to 'remain a slave in the kitchen and allow my yolk to lose all the rights and freedom to which they are entitled as citizens of a country for which our forefathers shed their blood'.(39)

Rather than having eschewed ethnic identity in favour of class solidarity, there is evidence of eagerness on the part of leading Afrikaner women in the GWU to establish their volksmoeder credentials. As Anna Jacobs pointed out, it was the mark of a good Afrikaner mother that she would not sit back and watch while her children starved:

What does it help for us women to stay at home with the pots and pans if they are empty? Must we fold our little hands and wait for the food to fall into the pots of its own accord? ... We shall not stand by and watch while our expectant mothers succumb from hunger and misery and the newborn child has to come into the world without any clothes.(40)
Citing their hard work and resilience in coping with reduced circumstances as badges of honour, the spokeswomen of the GWU challenged the idea of the Afrikaner poor as a 'fallen' component of the yolk. They insisted that factory workers deserved to be treated as a legitimate and respectable part of the Afrikaner nation. To the extent that they did so, they were effectively -- if unwittingly -- propagandists for the idea of cross-class ethnic unity which lay at the very heart of the nationalist project:

We, as ... workers and housewives, must fight together against this terrible problem. We are honest workers and our labour is for the benefit of our country and our yolk. Why must we be neglected like this? ... (41)

The volksmoeder ideology which painted Afrikaner women as noble and honourable, courageous and hard-working offered these women one vehicle to fight back against their extreme marginalization.

The GWU, for its part, proffered working class identity as an alternative to ethnicity. In the GWU's official mouthpiece, Die Klerewerker, as well as in the plays, songs and poems that were part of the cultural repository of the union, the search for class identity as an alternative to ethnic consciousness is evident. Whether the union was responding to Afrikaner nationalism or vice versa is open to debate. While Iris Berger argues that trade unions helped to create a sense of community for their members by sponsoring educational programmes and various forms of recreation, she points out that 'the young Afrikaner women in the factories formed part of a growing and increasingly cohesive and self-conscious ethnic community centered around the Dutch Reformed Church. Filling an important role in working-class life, the church sponsored youth groups whose activities and outings also provided young women workers with a source of friends and community'.(42) Berger's understanding is nevertheless that Sachs 'succeeded brilliantly' in bringing women into the union mainly because he was able to combine 'the "inherent" identity that formed an essential part of women's ethnic heritage with the "derived" ideology of socialism and class struggle'.(43) An alternative interpretation is to see the union, under pressure from the growing influence of nationalist ideology, as having increasingly to resort to the incorporation of volksmoeder imagery into its own vocabulary. As Berger later concedes, it was in response to attacks against the GWU that the union 'tried to use the symbols of Afrikaner nationalism for its own purposes' and to develop in its members 'healthy' nationalist aspirations.(44)

The electoral failure of Sachs' Independent Labour Party in contrast to the later electoral success of the Nationalists, along with the apparent inability of Sachs to win the fight against racism among his rank-and-file members makes his success seem less unequivocal. While the garment workers rejected the fascist ideas of the far-right organizations that rose to prominence briefly in the 1930s, what they embraced instead was not socialism, but what was to become the dominant discourse of Afrikaner nationalism, complete with its volksmoeder iconography and racial assumptions. In focusing the bulk of his attack on the threat of fascism, Sachs failed to address Afrikaner nationalism itself. Afrikaner nationalism and fascism were neither analogous nor identical and it is this fact which explains how Sachs's followers could accept much of
what he had to say and yet at the same time continue to view themselves as primarily Afrikaner women.

Within months of Hitler's accession to power in January 1933, a number of ultra right 'shirt' movements had arisen in South Africa. They modelled their programmes not on 'anti-black' sentiment but on anti-Semitism. Undoubtedly, the most important of these were the 'Greyshirts' who were formed in Cape Town in October 1933 and who attracted thousands to their meetings. Their existence gave rise to the widely-held view in Communist Party circles at the time that Afrikaner nationalism was nothing less than a form of barely disguised Nazism. The classical exposition of this view is to be found in the work of Sachs's Communist Party colleague, Brian Bunting, whose The Rise of the South African Reich was published in 1964. To some extent this approach is echoed in liberal analyses which have sought to account for the National Party's success in 1948 by reference to the hidden hand of the Afrikaner Broederbond.

Sachs shared Bunting's approach. While he dismissed the United Party as the party of imperialism, Malan's Nationalists were somewhat disingenuously labelled 'Nazis'. Clearly aware that Afrikaner nationalism represented his major competitor and, conscious of losing ground to the nationalists, Sachs frequently expressed his frustration that the nationalist message should have any resonance at all among his constituency. He saw Afrikaner nationalists as cynically manipulating workers in pursuit of their own political goals and wanted to 'tear the mask of hypocrisy off the faces of the ruling class, and the large number of the so-called friends of the workers and show them up in their true colours'. He argued that workers were being deluded by these 'false prophets' who wanted only to protect the interests of mining magnates and financiers.

Sachs claimed that the true tradition of the Afrikaner yolk was fervently anti-imperialist and that the United Party was responsible for the betrayal of that tradition. What he appeared to fail to appreciate was that this critique of the United Party was shared by Dr Malan and the 'Purified Nationalists'. But the Shirt Movements that Sachs was so eager to denounce and with which he attempted to equate Malanite nationalism were not coterminous with Afrikaner nationalism. Although, as Furlong has argued, the fascist organizations had a lasting ideological impact on Afrikaner nationalism, in their organizational expression they were regarded as a divisive minority, which was ultimately defeated.

It was increasingly recognized as crucial to the political victory of Afrikaner nationalism that recently enfranchised, working class Afrikaner women should vote as Afrikaners rather than as socialist workers. More than that, they were required to bring up their children with a nationalist rather than a working class consciousness. The volksmoeder ideology was one vehicle for popularizing this crusade. But rather than being a static set of precepts, the ideology was itself constantly being reinvented, with differing versions on offer. Far-right organizations like the Ossewabrandwag (Ox-wagon Guard -- OB) called on women to go back into the home, to populate the volk with large families and to regard employment as well as political involvement as of secondary importance to their fundamental calling in life. Women, they intoned, should eschew narrow personal ambitions and seek instead the good of the yolk:
In our individualistic, egotistical and liberal society a false impression of motherhood has come into existence, namely that it is a burden and a bother while it is thought to sound very fashionable to speak, to jeer and scoff at the thought of a large family. By enlightening the yolk we shall be able to restore the conception of motherhood as the highest calling of the woman, to its position of honour. In this way we shall be able to ensure that the yolk placed greater value on the woman who takes care of her maternal responsibilities.(49)

This narrow form of the volksmoeder ideology was not acceptable to many Afrikaner women. Again and again, the garment workers rejected the Afrikaner far right as 'foreign' voices within Afrikaner nationalism. They were goggas (insects) which every honest, upright Afrikaner ought to treat with disdain.(50) Johanna Cornelius and other leading garment workers addressed meetings in towns across the country where they 'castigated the Nazis in South Africa as a "vicious crowd"'.(51) For those whose daily experience testified to the suffering that often went with large families, and who had no choice but to work in order to feed their children, the contradictions in the far-right's gender ideology must have been very stark indeed. Like their middle class counterparts who worked with the Afrikaner poor in welfare or church organizations, they were aware of high infant and maternal mortality. In contrast to the call of the far right for women to stay at home and have babies, Afrikaner women of all classes called for smaller families and improved education and employment opportunities.

The rejection of the far right as 'foreign' to the 'true spirit' of Afrikanerdom was shared by leading elements in the nationalist movement. While trade unionists feared that the Shirt Movements would form a fascist fifth column within the unions, Afrikaner nationalists also had much to fear from the fascist organizations. When the South African Party Minister of Defence, Hendrik Mentz,(52) was kidnapped from his home by four members of the new far right political underworld and bound and whipped, Dr D. F. Malan, leader of the National Party, denounced this crime and attributed it to the OB.(53) The far right organizations and their controversial methods were seen as a divisive force in a movement which had begun in earnest to seek the unity of its members across barriers of class, gender and region.

As Afrikaner nationalism began to address itself to working class Afrikaners, the absence of a vocabulary of ethnicity in the GWU's social analysis became increasingly apparent. It was clear to Sachs that nationalism had to be taken seriously and he attempted to weave an analysis that included both a class and an ethnic dimension.(54) He suggested that Labour's poor showing in the General Election of 1938 indicated that the white working class supported the Labour Party only in negligible numbers.(55) The national sentiments and strivings of the Afrikaner, he argued, including the Afrikaner worker, have in the main been entirely ignored by the leaders of organized labour:

It is all very well to repeat time and again 'we are workers, we are not concerned with nationality, we should think as workers, irrespective of nationality'. All this may sound very advanced and correct in theory, but in practice it has been proved time and time again, that where the Labour Movement ignores or neglects to adopt a definite line on the
National question, the nationally minded yolk will look for a lead elsewhere, and they have not very far to go in South Africa. (56)

As Sachs himself pointed out, the masses of the Afrikaner yolk had as yet no 'industrial tradition'; as recent arrivals in the urban areas (57) they were just as likely to be influenced by past experiences as by their present environment:

They are agrarians with an agrarian outlook and tradition .... They attribute their poverty not to capitalist exploitation, but to National oppression. [Organized labour] has failed to give the lead on the National question, failed to orient itself to the masses of Afrikaner yolk ... to whom National freedom is of greater importance than anything else. (58)

In the course of an increasingly bitter conflict between Sachs and organized Afrikaner nationalism, the question of race became central. On the one hand it was a primary concern for Sachs that workers should unite against attempts to divide them along racial lines. On the other hand, charges of racial 'mixing' were a recurrent theme in attacks against the union and its supporters. Nationalist propagandists drew a link between the abandonment of racial barriers and the threat of communism. Moreover, the racial question interacted very directly with the volksmoeder ideology. It is in their acceptance of the racial ideology of Afrikaner nationalism that both the garment workers' material interests and their sense of self identity, as well as the ultimate failure of Sach's project, is most tellingly revealed.

The GWU and the Race Question

Patrick Furlong points out that during the 1930s the 'obsession with racial purity reached hysterical proportions', peaking during the 1938 election campaign. (59) Women were specifically targeted in a notorious nationalist election poster that pictured a white woman, a black man and their children under the slogan 'Mixed Marriages'. The United Party presented the campaign as an 'attack on white women' and demanded that the posters be removed from the streets. In response, a group of nationalist women at De Aar in the Cape interior resolved to express 'the strongest protest' that the 'Jewish-imperialist press', by attacking the poster, was trying to draw the attention of the volk away from the 'real danger of miscegenation'. (60)

The 'purity' of the Afrikaner woman, which was said to be responsible for keeping the Afrikaner bloodline free of 'contamination', was a central theme in the nationalist narrative. Any attempt to question racial segregation was presented as a betrayal of the Afrikaner volk's true heritage. Claiming steadfast support for racial exclusivity thus became important to the garment workers if they were to be accepted as respectable members of the volk. Whatever Sachs's personal feelings might have been, the GWU was not able consistently to provide a coherent alternative to racism, not least because many of the concessions which it won for its members relied on the union's incorporation into a racially defined industrial relations system.

Talk of class unity across cleavages of race increasingly contradicted the union's attempts to accommodate Afrikaner ethnic identity, given the latter's emphasis on racial
segregation. The question of women working side-by-side with Africans in the factories was beginning to receive close attention in nationalist circles. Both communism and racial integration were depicted as 'foreign tendencies' brought to South Africa by 'outsiders' like Solly Sachs. In order to combat the influence of 'foreign tendencies', Afrikaner nationalist organizations set about attempting to provide an alternative cultural milieu for working class Afrikaner women. Hostels for 'factory girls' run by the DRC's ally, the ACVV,(61) were typically closely supervised and saw as part of their mission kulturele opheffing (cultural upliftment). Recreational activities included such activities as drama, reading groups, dancing lessons and, inevitably, compulsory church attendance.

Hostel superintendents discouraged 'unsuitable' friendships (which usually implied friendships across the colour line) and the ACVV made every effort to promote race consciousness among the Afrikaner poor, the lack of which consciousness was seen to be their primary shortcoming. Marijke Du Toit for example, refers to an ACVV creche started in 1933 for the children of white working mothers:

Children who were otherwise 'forced' to play with 'gekleurdes' (coloureds) could spend time in the racially pure environment of the creche. This involved making absolutely certain that the children where 'white' ... it was also felt that both parents must be seen, in order to avoid problems with children of 'dubious race'.(62)

Racism was one of the most powerful anti-union tools wielded by the nationalist movement. But the race card was effective in trumping Sach's socialist hand precisely because it interacted with the existing prejudices of the garment workers themselves. This is a point echoed by Iris Berger's finding that incidents of racial tension on the factory floor in this period were 'usually a result of the racism of white women'.(63) Referring to the Johannesburg unions' reputation for racial exclusivity, Berger notes that, 'Repeated assurances from progressive union officials rarely convinced coloured garment or textile workers that ordinary white union members would sustain policies of interracial equality or cooperation.'(64) And when Cape organizer Bettie Du Toit danced with a coloured union chairperson at a fundraising event, she recalled, 'the resignations came in fast and furious'. White women charged that she was 'not a white girl' because 'no white girl would behave like that'.(65) For these women, their 'whiteness' was their only chance of achieving 'superiority'. By singling people out for assistance and attention solely because of this 'whiteness' the nationalist movement provided the basis for the entrenchment of racial identity. Rather than challenging the assumptions behind claims that racial barriers were being transgressed in the GWU, such accusations were interpreted on every occasion as yet another slight on the dignity of the garment workers. For example, when a nationalist commentator said of a GWU cultural gathering that 'Free State girls come to Johannesburg to dance with kaffirs', leading garment workers again and again referred to the comment as 'deeply insulting' and an attempt to 'drag the garment workers into the mud'.(66)

Given Sachs' own political background and the GWU's avowedly socialist outlook, the union was particularly vulnerable to the link that the nationalists sought to draw between communism and racial integration. Between 1929 and 1950 when the CPSA dissolved
under the threat of the Suppression of Communism Act, the CPSA embarked on an electoral strategy which targeted not only African and 'coloured' areas but also predominantly white areas. It was the only political party which saw the African majority as its primary constituency, but whose membership was open to both black and white South Africans. The party made it clear that it stood for a fundamental restructuring of race relations and it was therefore both ideologically and electorally in direct competition with the National Party. Nationalist propaganda targeted communism and racial integration simultaneously, using the existing racial prejudice of its constituency to undermine any potential for communist ideas to gain a foothold. This was clearly a particularly important strategy to use among Afrikaner workers who, if it were not for hostility to the CPSA's non-racial policies, would have formed a natural target for party organizers.

In their quest for respectability, working class Afrikaner women sought to use their supposed racial heritage to their advantage in a society in which social class and race were associated with putative innate capacities. This form of biological nationalism in which 'racial groups' were classified according to their supposed inherited (unequal) capacities was first systematized by Arthur de Gobineau in the nineteenth century. Civilization, de Gobineau suggested, could not be communicated and therefore 'backward races' could not reach a higher level. The highest plane on this hierarchy of being was supposedly occupied by the chosen people, the Teutonic or German race, and as racial ability depended on 'purity of blood', intermarriage was regarded as 'detrimental to civilization'.

This is a theme which emerges in South Africa's race discourse in the early part of the twentieth century when so-called delinquency on the part of whites was understood as a symptom of 'racial degeneration amongst the civilized races; it was seen as a consequence of the uncontrolled development of a black and white proletariat thrown together in the cities'. The motif of racial purity placed particular emphasis on the responsibility of white women for keeping the bloodline 'pure'. In Jonathan Hyslop's study of the Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party's campaign for legislation against 'mixed' marriages from 1934, he argues that the new-found independence of young Afrikaner women who had entered wage labour 'threatened the patriarchal relations of white society'. Afrikaner families found themselves in crisis, faced by the prospect of losing control over their young female members. In the attempt to win back control, black men were portrayed as a sexual danger to white women who had to look to their Afrikaner men for protection. Hyslop interprets the Nationalists' hysteria about 'mixed' marriages, in part, as an attempt to re-establish gender hierarchy in a context of crisis in the Afrikaner family. The Nationalists' campaign met with only limited success, not because its racist underpinnings were rejected by the white electorate but because the United Party was able to present the very idea of white women voluntarily marrying black men as unthinkable and a slander on white womanhood.

In this ideological context, the garment workers' membership of a labour union which attempted to question racial prejudice, their work in factories alongside members of 'other races' and the fact that they tended to live in 'racially mixed' areas made them extremely vulnerable. To the extent that the garment workers were seen as having abandoned an
unwritten but sharply defined racial and sexual code of conduct, they risked being branded as degenerates and delinquents. Their response was to appeal to the ideological armoury of the volksmoeder to establish their credentials as members of the white Afrikaner yolk. In doing so they embarked on a project which dove-tailed neatly with the populist ambitions of Afrikaner nationalism encapsulated in the slogan Eendrag Maak Mag (Unity is Strength)(73)

The Garment Workers and Afrikaner Unity

In the light of the recent enfranchisement of white South African women, there was a growing recognition within certain nationalist circles of the importance of attacking Sachs's union but not the Afrikaner women in it. Dangers of various kinds notwithstanding, it was argued, even in the urban setting, the working Afrikaner woman could embody the noble volksmoeder heritage. In this sense the nationalist project as defined by its leading cultural entrepreneurs (but not yet entirely accepted by the middle class members of its constituency), coincided with the protestations of working class Afrikaner women themselves, who were arguing that they too were members of the yolk and had a right to claim for themselves the mantle of the volksmoeder. These women were stung by the contempt with which they were often treated. But rather than being satisfied with the union as an alternative ideological home, they sought acceptance within the ranks of a 'nation' in which racial identity alone was a passport to approbation for even the most poor and marginal of members.

A newly-acquired urban working class consciousness interacted with a set of assumptions framed in racism and the mythology of a recently lost rural past, as well as with the derived ideas of the nationalist movement, to inform the garment workers' quest to be recognized as Afrikaners. While it would be some years before they would transform their ethnic identity into a firm political commitment to nationalism, they were, from the outset, able to use their numerical strength as a bargaining tool. Thus Johanna Cornelius called on the nationalists to:

remember the hundreds of women, the Voortrekker mothers who gave their lives for you who today are sitting knee-deep in gold. Hear their prayers and let us, the present-day mothers of South Africa, enjoy a decent life, give us decent food for our children, and give us shelter, and we promise you that we shall bring our children up as good citizens of the country, we shall keep the name of our yolk held high, to our most distant descendants. Away with hate, rule us with a hand of love.(74)

For all those who sought, for a variety of reasons, an Afrikaner nationalism that was unified and inclusive, the centenary celebration of the Great Trek provided a unique opportunity. Dunbar Moodie has commented at some length on the centrality of the Great Trek to the 'sacred saga' of Afrikanerdom. For Afrikaner nationalists, the Great Trek, he argues, played the role in the national epic of 'formal proof of God's election of the Afrikaner yolk and His special destiny for them'.(75) The centenary celebrations of 1938 are thus a key moment in Afrikaner nationalism. Indeed, Moodie goes so far as to argue that they mark the moment at which 'the civil faith now became a guaranteed effective
ideological agency of social and economic mobilization'. (76) A century after the Great Trek, the unifiers asked, would the yolk allow all those years of hardship to be trampled underfoot by 'foreign ideas' and 'outside elements' (uitlandse elemente)? These ideas included the fascism of the Shirt Movements as much as the communism of Solly Sachs. (77)

Women featured centrally in the national epic of the Great Trek. The stories about the Voortrekker mothers and the women who were prepared to trapse barefoot across the Drakensberg in order to escape the imperial oppressor were legend. Under the influence of the Afrikaner Broederbond, localized celebrations of the Trek did take place on the Rand throughout the 1920s, but it was only with the formation of the Broederbond-inspired Federasie van Afrikaner Kultuur (FAK) in 1929 that the idea of a national centenary celebration for 1938 was first mooted. Thus, 16 December 1938 became a focal point giving purpose and direction to the FAK’s project of bringing together all the diverse cultural activities of Afrikanerdom under the mantle of a single, consistent rhetoric. (78) The call for unity was aimed specifically at discrediting the divisive activities of the far right. Fascism, it was argued, was a danger to the Voortrekker tradition and would 'never have been tolerated by our forefathers'. (79)

The anti-fascist views of both the Afrikaner nationalist leadership and the garment workers, came together neatly in the preparations for 16 December 1938. The garment workers, in effect, played a part in the project of unifying Afrikanerdom by arguing for their own participation in the centenary celebrations. In the October 1938 edition of Die Klerewerker, an article by Hester Cornelius entitled 'Ons en die Voortrekker-eeufees!' (Us and the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations) explained the significance of the Great Trek centenary in terms indistinguishable from the mainstream discourse of Afrikaner nationalism:

It is a hundred years ago that our small nation achieved the victory which made possible our freedom here in the North. That day was a victory for our forefathers which can never be forgotten .... (80)

Cornelius urged her readers to take the centenary seriously. Echoing an appeal made by Mrs M. T. Steyn in Die Huisgenoot (81) almost a decade earlier, Cornelius called for Voortrekker dress to be worn by garment workers attending the festivities, not just out of fun, but as a form of recognition of the achievements of Piet Retief, Piet Uys, Andries Potgieter, Pieter Maritz and others who 'with courage and daring led the volk into a wild and uninhabited land'. (82) She appealed to GWU members to join in the centenary celebrations:

Let us here on the Rand also celebrate and go out to meet the Voortrekker wagons. Let our old folk songs once again sound among the hills. We as a garment workers' union should shake our members who toil from early in the morning until late at night awake from their dreams and cheer them on to join the celebrations. We should also be nurturing those three traits which shone out in our Voortrekkers, namely courage, determination and enterprise. (83)
It was by claiming their rightful place in this tradition that garment workers could silence those who sought to call into question their respectability:

Others may scream and blacken our names, but we continue on our way, just as the Voortrekkers followed the path into darkest South Africa. It is our culture and we want to keep it pure and hold it high.(84)

As a vehicle for the participation of the garment workers in the centenary celebrations, Kappie-Kornmando's (Bonnet Brigades) were set up under the leadership of Hester and Johanna Cornelius. Workers met in neighbourhood groups to sew traditional clothing and rehearse dances and songs that would be performed before the yolk on 16 December.(85) Die Klerewerker carried illustrations of women in Voortrekker dress as examples for those who wished to create their own costumes(86) and the December 1938 edition of the magazine pictured Johanna Cornelius herself dressed in the characteristic Voortrekker costume.(87)

The growth of Afrikaner nationalism then, cannot simply be conceived in terms of the machinations of middle class cultural entrepreneurs who managed to seduce a compliant audience. The garment workers played an active role in achieving recognition for working class women as legitimate members of the yolk. They insisted on their own participation in the centenary celebrations despite the fact that this was initially unpopular with certain elements in the nationalist movement. A Mr Kok, for example, argued in Die Transvaaler that the intention of the garment workers to participate in the centenary festivities 'should be choked at the bud'.(88) The Garment Worker argued in response that union members should be allowed to participate because among them were many whose fathers had died in the South African War and almost all of them were direct descendants of the Voortrekkers.(89)

Another GWU opponent, D. B. H. Grobbelaar, wrote in a letter to Sachs that the union's participation in the centenary festivities would be 'a mockery of our national traditions'.(90) But he made it clear that the participation of the Afrikaner women would be welcomed if they participated as members of the volk and not of the union. The Afrikaner nation was, he argued, in the process of uniting. Afrikaners did not recognize the 'classes' which Sachs was trying to introduce. Therefore they did not want the garment workers to participate in the celebrations as a 'class' but 'all together with us Boers - the factory girl together with the professor's wife'.(91) For Grobbelaar, these women were Afrikaners whose rightful place was with the volk, who found themselves temporarily in Sachs's clutches.

Early in November, the centenary organizing committee met with representatives of the Kappiekommandos to inform them that festival organizers around the country were being called upon 'to receive the girls into their midst and treat them as fellow Afrikaners'.(92) Hester Cornelius, representing the Germiston Kappiekommando, welcomed the news. The festivities were regarded by workers, she argued, as 'holy' and as members of the Afrikaner nation, it was the responsibility of every Afrikaner to defend both the honour and the living standards of the garment workers. Moreover, this ought to be a lasting bond rather than simply extending to cultural activities.(93) Cornelius thus saw the 1938
Great Trek centenary celebration as marking the point at which the incorporation of working class women into the Afrikaner nation gained enduring acceptance from those already within the borders of the imagined community.

Conclusion

Jonathan Hyslop's study of pre-apartheid Nationalist agitation against 'mixed' marriages points out that 'the way in which representations are constructed and disseminated' is central to the business of politics. Moreover, he argues, explanation is insufficient if it 'confines itself to accounting for how Afrikaner nationalism organized the consolidation of the leadership of emergent bourgeois over subordinate classes and of white over black'. There is another dynamic, he suggests, which is central, namely 'the organization of a new form of the domination of Afrikaner men over Afrikaner women'. Yet while Hyslop recognizes the importance of gender relations to the construction of Afrikaner nationalism he does not say a great deal about how Afrikaner women themselves received or interacted with these ideas. As the title of a paper by Elsabe Brink suggests, women are frequently portrayed as the passive recipients of 'man-made' ideological constructs.

This paper has attempted to describe some of the ways in which some Afrikaner women interacted with the notion of the volksmoeder as a central icon in Afrikaner nationalism's gender ideology. In the case of working class Afrikaner women, there were several competitors for their ideological allegiance. The ultimate success of Afrikaner nationalism in unifying the white electorate suggests that, despite their exposure to a range of alternative ideas, these women found some appeal in what are commonly portrayed as an oppressive set of gender stereotypes proffered by the nationalist movement. The paper suggests that one of the reasons for this appeal lies in the fact that through their interaction with the volksmoeder ideology women, both working and middle class, were able to reshape its content to some extent. Whereas the 'factory girl' might not have been what Willem Postma and his contemporaries had in mind when they crafted the notion of the volksmoeder, rather than rejecting the powerful volksmoeder mythology outright, leading Afrikaner women in the GWU helped to extend its interpretation to include the reality of women in wage labour. The process of ideological mobilization is never purely a contest between leaders in which their constituents are afforded a merely responsive role. While powerful groups undoubtedly play a conscious and influential role in manipulating sectors of society, as Bozzoli has noted, we need to ask what it is that creates the social cleavages which may be so fruitfully employed in the service of one cause or another.

By 1938, the battle to install class consciousness as the primary self-conception of the women of the GWU had been substantially lost. While these working class, Afrikaans speaking women did not, as is often supposed, reject ethnicity in favour of class identity, nor is their class position irrelevant to an understanding of their participation in the nationalist movement. It was their marginal status and their quest for respect and respectability that motivated leading working class Afrikaner women to reinterpret their experience of poverty and hardship using the iconography of Afrikaner nationalist
ideology. This meant that they were receptive to the new populism in the nationalist message while at the same time challenging far right ideas about the impropriety of women in paid employment. In doing so they acted as important agents in a project whose greatest achievement was to conceive of the possibility of unity among so disparate and fractured a set of interests as came to be known as Afrikanerdom.

Notes

(1) Die Klerewerker (October 1938), p. 9 (translation).


(3) While the rural white population was just over 51 per cent of the total white population in 1920, by 1931 this figure had fallen to under 39 per cent. See E. Brink, 'Maar Net 'n Klomp Factory Meide': Afrikaner Family and Community on the Witwatersrand during the 1920s', in B. Bozzoli (ed), Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1987), p. 178.


(7) M. Jacobson, 'Introduction to the Garment Workers' Collection' (University of the Witwatersrand), p. ix.

(8) But as Martin Nicol has pointed out, most of these were members simply by virtue of a clause in the industrial council agreement that TCMA members could only employ trade union labour. Martin Nicol, "Joh'burg Hotheads" and the "Gullible Children of Cape Town": the Transvaal Garment Workers' Union's Assault on Low Wages in the Cape Town Clothing Industry, 1930-1931', in Bozzoli, Class, Community and Conflict, p. 211.

(9) Ibid.

(10) E. S. Sachs, 'Ten Years in Service of the Garment Workers', The Garment Worker (November 1938), p. 3.

(11) Ibid.
(12) Ibid.

(13) The Garment Worker (February 1939), p. 4.


(15) Ibid.


(17) Berger, Threads of Solidarity, p. 276.

(18) In 1875, a Dutch Reformed minister, S. J. Du Toit, the school teacher C. P. Hoogenhout and six others founded the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (Society of True Afrikaners) (GRA) to rescue the Afrikaans language from its association with poverty and to obtain recognition for Afrikaans as the language of 'the Afrikaner people' which, the GRA argued, was a distinct ethnic group. The GRA popularized its aims through its newspaper, Die Patriot (the Patriot), and the publication of a nationalist history, a grammar and several school texts. In 1880, Du Toit founded the Afrikaner Bond (Afrikaner League) (AB) with the aim of co-ordinating the activities of the GRA and the newly-founded Boeren Vereniging established by Jan Hofmeyr in 1878. Various other Dutch-Afrikaans cultural and language organizations and debating societies were also set up in this period. Together, all this activity subsequently came to be referred to as the Eerste Taal Beweging (First Language Movement). As Marijke Du Toit, 'Women, Welfare and the Nurturing of Afrikaner Nationalism: A Social History of the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging, c. 1870-1939' (DPhil Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1996), p. 20, points out, women were largely absent from this early Afrikaner ethnic politics.

(19) Talia (pseudonym), Die Huisgenoot (May 1919), p. 11.

(20) Langenhoven's Die Vrouw van Suid-Afrika. Dramatiese Fantasie which first appeared in 1918, dealt with 'the role played by the woman in the adventures of the Afrikaner People and her history of suffering and struggle and wandering, from the time when the Voortrekkers left Natal to the time of the last English War'. Reviewed in Die Huisgenoot (November 1918), p. 543.

(21) Postma's 1918 book was entitled Die Boerevrouw. Moeder van haar Volk (The Boer Woman, Mother of her Volk).

(22) Die Huisgenoot (May 1920), pp. 6-8.

(23) The organization was launched as the Zuid Afrikaansche Vrouwe Vereeniging (ZAVV) in 1904, renamed the Zuid Afrikaansche Christelyke Vrouwe Vereniging (South African Christian Women's Organization) soon after, but came to be known as the


(25) Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p. 239.

(26) E. Walter, 'Moederskap', Die Huisgenoot (1 April 1927), p. 49 (translation).

(27) Die Huisgenoot (27 March 1925), p. 28 (translation).

(28) Memorandum submitted by the GWU to the Wage Board Investigation into the Clothing Industry of South Africa (August 1946), p. 2.


(30) Ibid.


(32) Eminent Dutch Reformed churchman J. D. Kestell was a leading figure in the formation of the Afrikaner nationalist cultural mythology. In 1916, he was appointed chairman of the Dutch Reformed Church's bible translation project. In 1920, he became rector of Grey College, Bloemfontein where he 'did all he could to make this institution Afrikaner in character' (Dictionary of South African Biography, Vol. 1). He was one of the key-note speakers at the Great Trek centenary festivities in 1938. On these and other occasions he propagated the idea that 'a nation saves itself through ion' -- a notion which he sought to put into practice with the establishment of the Reddingsdaadbond in 1938. He died in 1941 and was buried in the enclosure of the national women's monument alongside General de Wet and President Steyn.


(35) Brink, 'Maar net 'n Klomp Factory Meide', p. 292.

(36) Berger, Threads of Solidarity, p. 70.

(37) Berger, Threads of Solidarity, p. 125.
(38) As Iris Berger has pointed out, 'if these young women guided their actions by any ideological prescriptions at this time, it was not yet as socialists, but as "rebels' daughters", the offspring of Afrikaner men who had led an armed uprising against British domination in 1915-16'. Berger, Threads of Solidarity, p. 102.


(40) A. Jacobs (Vice-President of the Germiston branch of the GWU), 'Die Vyande van die Werkendeklas', Die Klerewerker, (February 1940), p. 4 (translation).


(42) Berger, Threads of Solidarity, p. 87.

(43) Berger, Threads of Solidarity, p. 91.

(44) Berger, Threads of Solidarity, p. 125.


(47) The Ossewabrandwag was a paramilitary organization formed as an outgrowth of the 1938 Great Trek centenary celebrations. It was to become a key vehicle of fascist sentiment in South Africa (Furlong, Crown and Swastika, p. 111).

(n48) Ossewabrandwag pamphlet, Garment Workers Collection, University of the Witwatersrand (undated), p. 1 (translation).

(49) Ossewabrandwag pamphlet, p. 19.

(50) A. Jacobs, Die Klerewerker (February 1940), p. 3.

(51) Berger, Threads of Solidarity, p. 123.

(52) Mentz had lost his seat to the right-wing nationalist Oswald Pirow in 1924. He also failed in his attempt to win the Swartruggens constituency for the SAP in 1929. He became a National Party supporter shortly before his death in 1938 (Dictionary of South African Biography, Vol. 111).

(53) Communist Party pamphlet, 'South Africa - Fascism or Democracy', Garment Workers' Collection, University of the Witwatersrand (undated), p. 6.

(57) Johanna Cornelius, for example, was the daughter of poor farmers from the Lichtenburg district. Her father had fought in the South African War on the republican side and her mother had been interned in a concentration camp. It was thus with justification that women such as Cornelius laid claim to the volksmoeder heritage.


(59) Furlong, Between Crown and Swastika, p. 99.

(60) Furlong, Between Crown and Swastika, p. 100.

(61) Marijke Du Toit points out that the ACVV's relationship with the DRC was a complex one: 'The ACVV had remained independent of church structures - occasional requests that it should submit to the synod's authority were met with polite refusals .... But although branches also maintained separate structures at the parish level, local Dutch Reformed churches depended heavily on ACVV women to help needy parishioners and sometimes also to boost the coffers of the church.' See Du Toit, 'Women, Welfare and the Nurturing of Afrikaner Nationalism', pp. 310-311.


(63) Berger, Threads of Solidarity, p. 82.

(64) Berger, Threads of Solidarity, p. 113.

(65) Berger, Threads of Solidarity, p. 114.


(72) Hyslop, 'White Working Class Women', p. 76.
Initially, the idea of women dressing up in Voortrekker clothing was regarded with some amusement. Mrs Steyn called on women to abandon this attitude: 'It is regarded by many people as a sort of joke [but] if all the Mothers and daughters would go out of their way to wear some distinctive item of Voortrekker clothing on Dingaan's Day, this would go a long way towards adding lustre to the festivities and would help us to enter into the history of our yolk which must remain for us enduring inspiration.' 'Dingaan's Day and Voortrekker Costume', Die Huisgenoot (13 September 1929), p. 43 (translated).
(93) Ibid.


(95) Hyslop, 'White Working-Class Women', p. 60.


(97) Bozzoli, Class, Community and Conflict, p. 21.