

“If you had been a man you would have gone a very long way...”: the public and private politics of Emeline du Toit, 1898 – c. 1948

by
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Abstract

Born as the youngest child of two of the most prominent Afrikaners of the 19th and 20th centuries, Emeline du Toit lived an explicitly political life, embodying her beliefs through her actions during some of the most important periods of Afrikaner nationalist development. With an innate ability to marry the public and private aspects of her life, Emmie used her personal connections to her benefit while working in the uppermost rungs of the National Party in the 1930s and 40s as one of a handful of women who were part and parcel of the decision-making processes. She would later join the right-wing, fascist group, the *Ossewabrandwag*, when she felt that the party was being weighed down by personal politics as opposed to working toward a notion of *volkseenheid* [unity of the nation/people] and the republican ideal she held on to with particular fervour. This work contributes to the broader body of the nationalist Afrikaner historiography and while illustrating the life of an outspoken and politically driven Afrikaner woman, who may otherwise have been known only by the footnotes marking the pages of biographies of the men she regarded as her friends and colleagues.

Keywords: Afrikaner nationalism; Afrikaner women; *Ossewabrandwag*; fascism in South Africa; women in South African politics

Abstrak¹

Emeline du Toit is gebore as die jongste kind in een van die prominentste Afrikaner huishoudings van die 19de en 20ste eeu. Sy het haar oortuigings uitgeleef deur aktiewe politieke deelname tydens een van die belangrikste tydperke in die ontwikkeling van Afrikaner nasionalisme. Emmie se ingebore vermoë om haar private en openbare lewe te integreer, het haar in staat gestel om voordeel te trek uit persoonlike verhoudings, terwyl sy saam met etlike ander vroue in die hoogste kringe van die Nasionale Party se besluitnemingsprosesse betrokke was. Sy het later by die regse, fascistiese groep, die *Ossewabrandwag* betrokke geraak, aangesien sy van mening was dat die Nasionale Party verval het in persoonlike politiek en nie werklik meer die ideologie van *volkseenheid* (die eenheid van die volk) en die republikeinse ideaal wat sy nagestreef het, bevorder het nie. Hierdie tesis dra nie net by tot die breër historiografie oor Afrikaner nasionalisme nie, maar poog ook om die lewe van 'n uitgesproke, politiek-gedrewe Afrikanervrou uit te beeld, wat andersins slegs as 'n voetnota genoem in die biografieë van manne wat sy as haar vriende en kollegas beskou het, geken sou wees.

Sleuteltermes/ Terme: Afrikaner nasionalisme; Afrikaner vroue; *Ossewabrandwag*; fascisme in Suid-Afrika; vroue in Suid-Afrikaanse politiek

¹ Kindly translated by Ilse Brookes

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Introduction

“You are a wonder and if you had been a man you would have gone a very long way, sewing your path through the jungle of life – now you have a part to play...”²

Playing the part encompasses the essence of who Emeline Johanna Steyn du Toit was.³ Born as the last child into arguably one of the most revered families of the then Orange Free State, her name would come to precede her presence and allow her into spaces dominated by the big men of Afrikaner Nationalist fame, or infamy. Access is everything and never being one to shy away from wielding her insider status, Emeline, known to most as Emmie, made full use of her positions both in the National Party (NP) and the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB), devoting much of her time to furthering the nationalist and more importantly, republican ideals that she so fervently stood for. She was however, also a woman of her time and ensured that her political aspirations did not detract from her ‘duties’ as a wife, mother, daughter and sister, obligations that she took to be just as serious as any political role. “Doing double duty” characterises a woman who felt obliged to serve both her family and her *volk* by any means.⁵ This study will attempt to illustrate how her family, their values and the environments she grew up in helped to shape her into a fierce defender of the Afrikaner ideals she held so dear. It will also illustrate the numerous roles and positions Emmie was allowed to play in the rise of the National Party and the peripheral organisations that worked to make the nationalist ideal a reality, often finding herself to be one of the few if not the only woman in the room.

Before one can launch into an in-depth analysis of the life of another, methodological and historiographical considerations must be made. The approach of this study will be biographical and be grounded in the historical method, employing the reading, analysis and critical interpretation of both primary archival sources and secondary literature. Human interest in the outstanding or noteworthy individual has piqued the interest of historians for centuries and has long manifested itself as biography.⁶ The nature of this biographical writing has evolved

² Cape Archive Repository (KAB): J.S. du Toit Collection, henceforth referred to as KAB A969. The collection is arranged only by box number (1-25) with the relevant box number being referred to. Box 13, Abe Bailey – Emmie, 15 March 1939.

³ Though she did not go by this full name, it does encompass the variations of her names and surnames that were used when she was referenced in books, articles and images.

⁵ The attempt to define *volk* is a challenging task and has been covered by a multitude of scholars. For the purposes of this study, the term denotes ‘nation’ or ‘people’ and is limited to white, Afrikaans speaking South Africans.

⁶ J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*. Longman Group, 1984, p.71.

substantially and continues to be increasingly frequent in both the stricter academic sense as well as the more ‘popular’ approach that aims for broader audiences and readership. The latter, which could be likened to a sort of public history, brings with it its own challenges, but when properly researched and presented can serve to bring forth historical actors and figures who may have otherwise only ever been referred to in the footnotes in the works of their contemporaries.

A modern biography and its author should aim to take account of every aspect of their subjects’ life, whether that be the conscious or the unconscious and the public or private realms.⁷ The emphasis on the private is a somewhat more recent development in biographical writing as it seeks to depict the deeper personality of the subject, facets that are not likely to be on public display.⁸ To understand the person in their entirety is to know the ins and outs of their personal life and understand the interplay of how they are presented in the public realm versus how they behave behind closed doors. This implies a need to employ a more humanist approach to the actual writing of a life and recognition that one is dealing with a human being. This is however not to say that we can then excuse or overlook certain standpoints taken by the subject and waive responsibility for their actions, particularly when these views would now be regarded as politically or socially incorrect. With regards to this, writing a ‘modern’ biography therefore comes with it the risk of anachronism, particularly when writing about the fervently right-wing orientated figures that this study is set to illustrate. J. M. Sardica stresses the notion that in spite of spaces or frameworks, human beings still maintain an intrinsic sense of good and evil that transcends historical periods whereby creating a “continuous moral ‘law’”.⁹ He goes on to describe biography as:

“...an excellent way of overcoming [this default], producing a kind of history that contextualises past moral choices (or the lack of them) in their own timeframe and not by anachronistic present-dated pre-judgement, avoiding a muted history that too often seems to ‘mitigate evil and belittle greatness’.”¹⁰

⁷ R. Gittings, *The Nature of Biography*. Heinemann: London, 1978, p. 49.

⁸ B. Caine, *Biography and History*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p 41.

⁹ J.M. Sardica, “The content and form of ‘conventional’ historical biography”, *Rethinking History*, (17) (3) (2013), p. 396.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* Sardica references G. Himmelfarb in the last line (1994’s *On Looking into the Abyss*). It is also important to note that this notion can be used in the reverse, with biographical writing being used to excuse or justify the actions taken by an individual that would now be considered unlawful or intrinsically wrong. These actions were wrong when they were taken but the points of reference at the time do not necessarily allow for such self-awareness.

With this comes a core responsibility of the historian; to understand the subject within their historical context and as individuals who are products of their time, environment and circumstances.¹¹ One cannot excuse the rhetoric and ideological standpoints taken by their subject/s but must be able to see them in the grander scheme of it all.

The focus on the individual in historical writing is not without its criticism or shortfalls. There is the question of the extent to which a singular life can illustrate significant changes in broader society or come to represent those affected by these changes. Opportunities for a distortion of their impact must also be taken into account, be it through overemphasis or exaggeration. This must also be kept in mind when the subject is a part of a larger cultural, social or political group or organisation and comes to play a major role therein. John Tosh is sceptical of this notion, particularly in the realm of political history, given that distortion came to characterise Victorian-era biographical writing. This is rooted in the use of biography as a commemorative piece of writing based almost exclusively on the subject's own papers and is therefore seen through the subject's own eyes. He does not however entirely dismiss the value of biography but rather notes its ability to help us understand motive and intention when explaining historical events, all within reason.¹²

A shift in focus on the lives of women emerged in the 1960s and 70s with the rise of feminism. Barbara Caine illustrates the emphasis on the domestic and private aspects as important not only in their own right, but also as a way of understanding and exploring the significant role gender plays in a life; how being born a girl can affect relationships with parents and siblings, affect one's education and standard thereof as well as influence significant life choices like that of a marriage partner.¹³ While the focus in her piece on feminist impulses in the writing of women's lives is aimed toward changes made in the 60s and 70s, she makes the following insightful remark:

“while women who engaged in public life and activity were the first to claim the attention of feminist biographers, attention has also been paid to those women who, while active in feminist movements, philanthropy or imperial ventures, never attained the status of

¹¹ J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, p. 72.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73. This is to say that the motives of an individual versus the social, political and economic forces of the time, can only play some part in the grander scheme of explaining historical events.

¹³ B. Caine, *Biography and History*, p. 45.

national leadership. Their lives are now seen as important not only in themselves [but] also because of the insights they offer into how important these various causes and issues were to the many women to whose lives they gave shape and meaning”¹⁴

Whilst reflecting on her career as a biographer, particularly of women, Susan Ware points out the marked differences in approaches when writing the lives of men versus those of women. The same principles could not be applied to both and a new interpretive and narrative structure with gender at the fore was established. She goes on to add that feminist biographers are of the view that the personal is political and “that the same attention must be paid to the daily lives of their subjects as to their more public achievements” and that the hallmark of a feminist biography is “close attention to the connections between subjects’ personal and professional lives”.¹⁵ The distinguishing element lies in focusing on gender being a primary influence on women’s lives.¹⁶ In the case of Emmie du Toit, I would propose to expand on this notion given that the political becomes personal with the two being intrinsically bound in the context of Afrikaner women in white nationalist South Africa. Gender and its designation of roles had a significant impact on how Afrikaner women built and lived their lives and therefore cannot be ignored. Nor will it be overemphasised to the point where it becomes the sole identifier of the subject and this study. While I am not a gender scholar, I am a feminist which will naturally influence the way that I view and write about this subject.

One could argue that writing about a prominent figure who came from a noteworthy family goes against the shift toward writing the histories of the ordinary man or woman. To this point, I take the view of Lois Banner, who when reviewing her own work, admits that she is “drawn to assessing cultural leaders and icons who articulated cultural understandings rather than individuals who followed or contested them.”¹⁷ Outliers like dissidents illustrate those who initially followed and participated in mass mobilisations or movements but later became outspokenly critical of their own and others participation therein. While studies of those individuals are vital, there is also something to be said of examining someone who was consistently outspoken in their adherence to a specific role or identity and served as a sort of figurehead to further nationalist agendas. The use of the term ‘icon’ also warrants some

¹⁴ B. Caine, *Biography and History*, p. 46.

¹⁵ S. Ware, “Writing Women’s Lives: One Historian’s Perspective”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 40, 3, (2010), pp. 413-414 & 417.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 417.

¹⁷ L. Banner, “AHR Roundtable: Biography as History”, *American Historical Review*, (June 2009), p. 584.

acknowledgment here as it played a part in the imagining and mythologizing of Afrikaner *volkseenheid* or unity.¹⁸ Prominent figures in culture and politics who supposedly embodied the ideals of the *volk* were portrayed as heroes and idols to whom the everyday man or woman could aspire to emulate. Upon surveying the extensive body of literature on Afrikaner nationalism and the individual role players within its development and eventual triumph in 1948, men naturally dominate the field as the drivers, actors and ‘idols’ in our recent and more distant past. In a strictly biographical sense, the subjects may vary in notoriety in terms of their rank or positions in institutions, government or general society but the gaze is still often a gendered one.

For the purposes of this study, an overview of the extensive body of work on Afrikaner culture, politics and nationalism, both biographical and otherwise, is essential. Within it, there is no individualised study that focuses solely on Emmie, thus making this the first. The same can be said for her sisters, each of whom led fascinating and dynamic lives that are worth noting. However, it is the youngest of the Steyn children who will be the centre of attention in this case. In many of the following works, Emmie is mentioned by name, albeit fleetingly, which is why so many texts had to be consulted. She is often referenced by several different names, all of which are variations of her married name as well as her maiden title. In some cases, she is indexed more than once, each time by a different name which makes for a challenging search when attempting to find information on her.¹⁹ In addition to this, her father’s name and title precede her on multiple occasions. This is not a unique case in terms of how women are written about, particularly in historical works. Caine identifies a shift in the focus that historians place on the role of women when writing about men in a revisionist sense. With a drive to re-evaluate the lives of these ‘great men’ of history by looking at the female members of their families and close circles, their relationships with one another as well as how they were treated or written about.²⁰ This still however, places the man at the epicentre of the work as the emphasis is still placed on the role of the woman *in relation* to the man. The aim of this work is to shift the

¹⁸ See D.F. Malan, *Afrikaner-volkseenheid en my ervarings op die pad daarheen*, Kaapstad, 1959. Dan O’Meara speaks of this concept in *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-1948*, Ravan Press, 1983, with the idea of an imagined homogenous *volk* that was essentially not a realistic objective despite the best efforts of politicians and people alike. The lack of unity has been pointed out as one of the primary flaws in the nationalist agenda.

¹⁹ The following are some of the ways used to refer to Emmie: Mrs E.J. du Toit, Mrs E.S. du Toit, Mrs Dr J.S. du Toit, Mrs J.S. du Toit, Emmie Steyn du Toit, Emmie du Toit, Emmie Steyn, Miss E.J. Steyn.

²⁰ B. Caine, *Biography and History*, p. 107.

focus on Emmie from being referenced in these pieces simply in relation to the men in her life in order to gauge her agency as an actor in her own right.

The issue with this revisionist style of writing Afrikaner nationalist history is acknowledging that this is how women were referenced or referred to at the time and to ignore or erase this notion would be imposing 21st century ideals on 20th century practices. For instance, the way that her father, former President of the Orange Free State M.T. Steyn's name precedes her own could be seen as an example of the power of Afrikaner iconography and collective memory. In some sense, it can be viewed as a contextual tool, as having Steyn as a frame of reference may have been helpful to some in understanding why she would have been in certain situations. Even more so, it can be seen as a tool that was used to validate her positions and the roles that she was being allowed to play.

Biographical texts of Emmie's contemporaries, friends and family are vital in their provision of the necessary context and detail on many of the important aspects of her own life that are otherwise not found in the available primary material. Some of the most important of these works are those that focus on her parents. There is an extensive volume of work on M.T. Steyn that ranges from the academically based work of M.C.E. van Schoor to the purely hagiographical texts that were published in the wake of his sudden death in 1916.²² Steyn's son-in-law Dr N.J. van der Merwe published his two-volume work in 1921 that is still regarded as one of the foremost works, given his proximity to the family.²³ Johannes Meintjes wrote both an English and an Afrikaans biography on Steyn but based much of it on Van der Merwe's work and other secondary sources rather than conducting empirical research.²⁴ Within these numerous works, little detailed attention is given to Steyn's relationship with his children which is understandable given the period into which they were born. Specific attention has been paid to his relationship with his wife, Tibbie in Karel Schoeman's *In Liefde en Trou* where pieces of their correspondence were contextualised to illustrate their remarkable marriage.²⁵ Historical Publications Southern Africa (formerly the Van Riebeeck Society) published a selection of Steyn's correspondence with his family, fellow statesmen and adversaries that

²² M.C.E. van Schoor: *Marthinus Theunis Steyn: regsman, staatsman en volksman*. Pretoria: Protea, 2009.

²³ N. J. van der Merwe: *Marthinus Theunis Steyn: 'n lewensbeskrywing*. Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1921.

²⁴ J. Meintjes: *President Steyn*. Nasionale Boekhandel Bpk: Kaapstad, 1969.

²⁵ K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou: die lewe van pres. M.T. Steyn en mev. Tibbie Steyn*. Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 1983.

builds on Schoeman's foundational work to help construct more consistent timelines and understand Steyn's relationship with his children.²⁶

Work on Emmie's mother Tibbie Steyn is similar in the sense of it consisting of both academically based studies as well as pieces written by those close to the family either as actual members or as admirers. An example of the latter is Nellie Kruger's *Rachel Isabella Steyn: Presidentsvrou* which illustrates her life and legacy and contains first-hand accounts given by Tibbie herself.²⁷ Kruger was in regular correspondence with the family and the book serves as more of a commemorative rather than an objective piece. The most extensive work on Tibbie is by Elbie Truter who focused both her MA and PhD dissertations on her life and legacy, a combination of the two pieces were later published in book format.²⁹ These works were extensively researched using primary materials, much of which was accessed through the family or through various archives who still hold her papers. Given that much of the focus on Tibbie is on her role as a mother, and therefore also focuses on her children, a combination of these works on has been vital in piecing together timelines and details on Emmie's life that are not otherwise accessible.

As noted above, individual biographies of nationalist Afrikaner women, particularly of those who were most active in the political realm, are in the minority. The few examples of female orientated Afrikaner biography focus on involvement in welfare and cultural organisations and the development thereof and include figures such as M.E. Rothman (M.E.R.), Erika Theron and Mabel Malherbe. In addition to a focus on non-politically aligned organisations, many of these examples emphasise and, in some cases, perpetuate the iconography of these women as *volksmoeders*, the highly contested and emotionally charged term used to describe women who embodied the soul of the *volk* and nurtured the future of the Afrikaner nation.

The work on M.E.R. is made up of both autobiographical work and other biographical pieces. In *My Beskeie Deel* (My Humble Part), M.E.R. reflects on her life and career as a mother,

²⁶ C. de Wet, E. van Heyningen & C. van der Merwe: *Selections from the Letters of President M.T. Steyn, 1904-1910*, Van Riebeeck Society: Cape Town, 2017.

²⁷ N. Kruger: *Rachel Isabella Steyn: Presidentsvrou*, Nasionale Boekhandel: Kaapstad, 1949. Kruger was a close friend of the Steyn family and more specifically of Tibbie herself. Correspondence regarding the writing of the book can be found at the Archive for Contemporary Affairs (ARCA) at the University of the Free State.

²⁹ E. Truter: *Tibbie: Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1865-1955: Haar lewe was haar boodskap*. Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 1997 & E.J.J. Truter: "Rachel Isabella Steyn 1905-1955", Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994.

writer and activist for Afrikaner welfare.³¹ She is candid in her recollections of her involvement in crucial organisations and groups that included the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging (ACVV), the Cape National Party, the *Ossewabrandwag* and the Voortrekkers. These provide insight into her experiences therein but must naturally be read critically as it is an autobiographical work. J.C. Steyn's biography on M.E.R. is a more expansive work that covers all 100 years of her life and delves deeper into her career and family life.³² There are striking similarities between Emmie and M.E.R. in terms of their views and objectives while involved with the National Party and the OB but Emmie is referenced only once in this work and there is no further correspondence that would imply an extensive relationship between the two women other than that of a professional nature.

The public life of Erika Theron is covered by Judith Tayler's PhD thesis in which Emmie is not mentioned despite the fact that their paths crossed on multiple occasions with their mutual involvement in the OB.³³ It is still of value for its insight into one of Emmie's contemporaries who shared similar views within the period but who would later walk a different path. Focus on other individual female role players in this period is limited to studies that have initially examined broader organisations or groups which then frame the individual and their involvement within it. This is the case in Lou-Marie Kruger's work on the construction and implementation of the *volksmoeder* discourse in *Die Boerevrou*, an Afrikaans women's magazine published under the editorship of Mabel Malherbe.³⁴ It is a pioneering work that examines the effects that the discourse had on class, gender and nationalism and the manifestations that evolved as a result. The Steyn women feature several times in the work.

It is also important to note that the political, cultural and social elements that constituted the makeup of Afrikaner society and life were intrinsically linked and had a significant influence on one another, particularly in the era of the rise of nationalism. Organisations played a key part in the socialisation of Afrikaners and provided spaces for the political agendas and ideas of the day to be articulated and discussed. These also consisted of constructed spaces like social clubs where wealthier prominent men, and occasionally women, were able to see and be seen

³¹ M.E.R.: *My Beskeie Deel: 'n outobiografiese vertelling*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1972.

³² J.C. Steyn: *Die 100 Jaar van MER*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 2004.

³³ J.A. Tayler: "With her shoulder to the wheel: the public life of Erika Theron (1907-1990)", Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 2010.

³⁴ L.M. Kruger: "Gender, community and identity: Women and Afrikaner nationalism in the *volksmoeder* discourse of *Die Boerevrou* (1919-1931)", Unpublished MSocSci thesis, University of Cape Town, 1991.

by their peers. Social welfare groups based on Afrikaner cultural ideals were formed to tackle problems identified by thought leaders that were believed to be holding Afrikaners back from their ‘true destiny’, some of which had clear political intentions behind them.

Studies on a number of these organisations and groups as well as their key role players have been undertaken on a multitude of levels. Louise Vincent conducted an in-depth look into the Nationalist women’s parties and is one of a handful of works that look at Afrikaner women’s direct involvement in politics in their own right.³⁵ She also outlines the problematic nature of the *volksmoeder* ideology and iconography employed by the women themselves and identifies some of the more prominent figures specifically within the Cape and Transvaal organisations. A second piece of hers examined the Afrikaner women’s involvement in the suffrage movement by challenging the notion that there was minimal involvement at all. Both of these are vital contextual foundations that provide a broader background of what these women were doing by their own fruition instead of framing their work in relation to their male counterparts. Further to this, Vincent gives agency to these women by demonstrating their direct involvement in their own campaigns for their rights that authors such as Kruger and Walker do not view as such.³⁶

Marijke du Toit focused the attention of her studies on the ACVV and the role of welfare in the development of nationalism. While Emmie was not involved in the ACVV, Du Toit’s work is important in understanding the domestic realm within Afrikanerdom, the role of the *volksmoeder* and further challenging the notion that Afrikaner women had a ‘male-invented’ ideology imposed on them rather than them claiming the concept for themselves.³⁷ This subversion of ‘ownership’ is present in other works that include Elsabe Brink’s ‘Man Made Women’ wherein women are seen as the hapless recipients of this concept rather than active consumers and participants in its construction and realisation.³⁸ Prominent male figures like Willem Postma ‘popularised’ the image with his publication, *Die Boervrouw: Moeder van haar*

³⁵ L. Vincent, “The Power Behind the Scenes: The Afrikaner Nationalist Women’s Parties, 1915 to 1931”, *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1 (May 1999), pp. 51-73.

³⁶ Vincent, L., “‘A Cake of Soap’: the *Volksmoeder* Ideology and the Afrikaner Women’s Campaign for the Vote”, March 1998, nr. 433, presented at the University of the Witwatersrand.

³⁷ M. du Toit, “The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 1 (March 2003), p. 156. Challenging Gaitskill & Unterhalter. Tibbie Steyn chaired the *Vrouefederasie* that oversaw the collaboration between the women-led welfare organisations in the four provinces, the ACVV being the Cape based organisation.

³⁸ E. Brink, “Man-made women: gender, class and the ideology of the *Volksmoeder*” in C. Walker (ed.): *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. London: James Currey, 1990.

Volk in 1918, which focused ideologically on the strength and resilience of the Afrikaner woman but Du Toit illustrates that the ACVV and other women were employing the same rhetoric and discourse well before Postma did so in his book.³⁹ Negating the ability of women to claim the notion for themselves is to negate their complicity in their eventual ‘demise’ when the term was turned back on itself and used to relegate women back to the domestic sphere.

The *volksmoeder* ideology features prominently in works that deal with women’s involvement in the *Ossewabrandwag* with the large majority of the literature being that of Charl Blignaut who has dedicated much, if not most, of his academic publications to the various aspects of women’s contributions to the organisation.⁴⁰ Blignaut’s contributions are important given that they are some of the only works to focus exclusively on women’s contributions whereas other works like that of Christoph Marx look at the organisation as a whole. When reading Blignaut and then looking at the roles played by individual women, there is a tendency to over-estimate the power of women-led rhetoric and action beyond initiatives like the *Noodhulpfonds* that was driven by the *Vrouefdeling* across the country.⁴¹ While it cannot be ignored that the biggest financial contributions to the organisation were spearheaded by women who were expected to be raising their families with the values of the OB, these same women were given surprisingly little say in the broader scheme of things. They did not consistently contribute to *Die OB* as their male counterparts did nor did their rhetoric differ in tone or content in a way that could suggest that they were not simply echoing the men. Women who were outspoken or dissented

³⁹ M. du Toit, “The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 1 (March 2003), p.162. See W. Postma: *Die Boervrouw: Moeder van haar Volk*, Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, 1918, referenced both in Brink and du Toit’s work. Anne McClintock makes a similar point in that within Afrikaner nationalism, the notion of motherhood is highly politicised and is under constant contest and “erasing Afrikaner women’s historic agency also erases their historic complicity in the annals of apartheid” (A. McClintock, “Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family”, *Feminist Review*, 44 (Summer 1993), p. 72).

⁴⁰ Blignaut’s publications include but are not limited to : “Die hand aan die wieg regeer die land [The hand that rocks the cradle rules the land]”: Exploring the Agency and Identity of Women in the Ossewa-Brandwag, 1939-1954”, *South African Historical Journal*, 67, 1 (2015), pp. 47-63; “Untold History with a Historiography: A Review of Scholarship on Afrikaner Women in South African History”, *South African Historical Journal*, 65, 4 (2013), pp. 596-617; “From fundraising to Freedom Day: The nature of women’s general activities in the *Ossewabrandwag*, 1939-1943”, *New Contree*, 66, (2013), pp. 121-150; “Doing gender is unavoidable: Women’s participation in the core activities of the Ossewa-Brandwag, 1938-1943”, *Historia*, 58, 2 (November 2013), pp. 1-18 & “Kan die vrou haar volk dien deur haar huis?”: Afrikanerpolitiek en vroue in die Ossewa-Brandwag, 1942 tot 1954”, *Journal for Contemporary History*, 40, 1 (June/July 2015), pp. 102-124.

⁴¹ The *Noodhulpfonds* or Emergency Relief Fund was set up to help the families of interred *Ossewabrandwag* prisoners during the Second World War.

from official OB policy were in the minority and more often than not consisted of women who occupied leadership positions.⁴²

Marx's monolithic *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag* is one of the foremost works that covers the relatively short but eventful period of the OB's existence from 1938 to the early 1950s. Marx's background as a political scientist is clear and the book has a strong focus on the politicisation of the movement. With that comes minimal focus on facets of the organisation such as the involvement and contributions of women and children.⁴³ Another monolithic work that has been criticised for its lack of female representation is Hermann Giliomee's *The Afrikaners*, an issue that Giliomee addressed with two follow up pieces that were then criticised as "rectification studies".⁴⁴ The issues with both have already been covered by many other authors and do not necessarily need to be reiterated here but one remains aware of the shortcomings of Giliomee's otherwise invaluable work.

A number of other publications provide additional context and insight into the broader happenings in the periods both before and during Emmie's lifetime, some of which do mention her by name. These include publications on the OB like Hans van Rensburg's *Their Paths Crossed Mine*, George Cloete Visser's *OB: Traitors or Patriots* and the recently published *Wit Terroriste: Afrikaner Saboteurs in die OB* by Albert Blake, the last of which is more of a popular work than what it is academic.⁴⁵ Further to this, Lindie Koorts' *DF Malan and the Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism* serves not only as crucial source of the general timelines within the

⁴² C. Marx: *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag*. Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2008, pp. 341-342. Some of the women in these leadership positions were the same people who contributed to *Die OB*, albeit in a limited capacity.

⁴³ The youth wing of the OB was called the *Jeugfront* and was managed by senior members and older youth who served on their own council. The gap in this literature is filled by Blignaut amongst others and includes *Die Ossewabrandwag: Vuurtjie in droë gras*, ed. P.F van der Schyff with contributions by a number of academics at the former Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.

⁴⁴ H. Giliomee: *The Afrikaners*. Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2009. See Belinda Bozzoli in historiography in C. Blignaut, "Untold History with a Historiography: A Review of Scholarship on Afrikaner Women in South African History", *South African Historical Journal*, 65, 4 (2013) p. 600 for comments on "rectification studies".

⁴⁵ J.F.J. Van Rensburg: *Their paths crossed mine: Memoirs of the Commandant-General of the Ossewabrandwag*. South Africa: Central News Agency, 1956; G.C. Visser: *OB: Traitors or Patriots?*, Macmillan, 1977 & A. Blake: *Wit Terroriste: Afrikaner-saboteurs in die Ossewabrandwagjare*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 2018. Both van Rensburg and Visser's books border on fiction and stand more as memoirs than they do as nuanced historical accounts.

rise of nationalism and the key role players within it but is also a source of inspiration for the style and approach to be employed in the writing of this piece.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2014 & L. Korf: "D.F. Malan: a political biography", Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 2010. Both the PhD dissertation and book will be used where relevant.

Sources

Primary sources are the foundation upon which a biography stands with the secondary contextual works providing the pillars that supplement and support it. To this end, sources were consulted in several archives around South Africa, each with their own challenges and shortcomings. Due to the nature of the subject many of the sources are housed in private collections, some of which still have restricted or conditional access. Accession 969 in the Western Cape Archives is no different. Labelled as the personal and professional papers of Dr Jacobus ‘Jacques’ Stephanus du Toit, the collection lacks an official catalogue or inventory and seemingly places the focus squarely on Du Toit’s student days and later career as an ophthalmologist in Cape Town. Only at the very end of this inconspicuous list of contents is Mrs E du Toit mentioned, stating only that the collection also contains her personal papers. According to official documentation, the collection is supposed to contain 25 boxes, only 23 of which were found. A small note explains that two boxes were removed and ‘placed in a safe’ as they contained sensitive material, but no mention is made of whether they were returned, transferred or destroyed. Up until the writing of this piece, these two boxes have not been found.

While this collection is the invaluable point of departure for this research, it does not tell the full story. There is minimal information and content that deals with Emmie’s very early life with much of the focus being on her extensive correspondence with her diverse group of friends and acquaintances as well as her family that cover the years that fall outside of the spectrum of this thesis. Almost the entirety of her courtship with her husband can be traced, albeit only from the letters and telegrams received by Emmie that date up until the days preceding their nuptials. One box contains a folder entirely dedicated to her correspondence whilst holding the position of ‘*Generale*’ in the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB) providing a small glimpse into the issues that those under her command raised as well as their praise and admiration for her leadership while more material on the OB and Emmie’s role therein are interspersed in other boxes that provide valuable but fleeting pieces of information. These brief insights into the contents of

the collection are simply to illustrate its inconsistency and shortcomings that were supplemented with the consultation of other archives and collections.⁴⁷

The University of the Free State's Archive for Contemporary Affairs (ARCA), formerly known as the Institute for Contemporary History or INCH, houses both the private collections of individuals as well as organisations, including that of the four provincial branches of the National Party. An expansive list was drawn up, consisting of Emmie's known correspondents, family and fellow OB members and their relevant private collections were consulted. The Cape branch and the Federal Council of the NP collections provided information that would not have been available elsewhere and included photographs, newspaper clippings and minute books whereby supplementing the findings in the Cape Archive.⁴⁸ Other archives include the *Ossewabrandwag* Archive located on the Potchefstroom campus of the North-West University (formerly the Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys) and the Special Collections division at Stellenbosch University Library. Some information was consulted in person whereas in the case of the OB archive, the relevant documentation was kindly sent electronically.⁴⁹

Valuable pieces from both the OB archive and ARCA are interviews with Emmie conducted in 1975 and 1981 respectively by the then archivists of both institutions. The OB interview has a strong focus on her involvement therein but it also delves into other facets of her life. This is central to understanding Emmie in her own words as diaries or journals belonging to her are not known to exist. The second interview deals with her relationship with General J.B.M. Hertzog, undertaken during the writing of one of his many biographies. However useful they may be, the interviews are not without their criticism. Tosh warns of the appeal of having or

⁴⁷ In the case of the archives that were consulted, a range of collections and boxes within them were filtered through. In many cases, the information in these folders and boxes were not of use by means of verbatim references but rather helped to augment the bigger image of what the collection contained. Consideration towards the value of each collection was taken and the direct relevance to Emmie was used to select the documents for use. This naturally means that the image of her is constructed along the lines of these documents that are then put together with the fleeting secondary references that do allude to her involvement and general life. Actual words directly attributed to Emmie were often difficult to come by and in many cases were simply not present.

⁴⁸ In J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, Tosh highlights a criticism faced by biography, that of only the private papers of a subject being consulted "instead of weighing [them] against the papers of colleagues and acquaintances and (where relevant) the public records for the period", p. 66. A version of the 'public record' comes with its own challenges as in the case of the ARCA NP collections, much of the documentation is of an administrative or official nature and may lack the rounded image that one seeks.

⁴⁹ The majority of the archival documents used are originally in Afrikaans and have been translated accordingly. In most cases the original Afrikaans text will be given first in italics and followed by the English translation. In other cases only the English translation is given due to the length of the given quote and is referenced as such.

trying to find *the* authoritative source given that like any other, it is still merely a reflection of one perspective that may be ‘tainted by prejudice or self-interest’.⁵⁰ Her perception of her role in certain events must be questioned given that she is looking at them retrospectively, some several decades after the time. With regards to the OB interview, Emmie was already 77 at the time of recording and, in the transcription, shows signs of a less-than perfect memory, often having to correct herself on the specifics or be corrected by the interviewers themselves. In spite of this, they still remain essential documents that provide insights into not only Emmie’s life, but also of the broader events in which she was involved and bore witness to.

Acknowledgement must be made towards the realities of working predominantly in the archival realm. Archives are highly curated spaces with the documents having been placed there with specific and pre-determined intentions. This is even more so in the case of private collections with items having been purposefully excluded or restricted. It is not necessarily a malicious intent that guides the decision-making process of document selection and often has more to do with protecting the surviving members of the family. In the case of material deemed as ‘sensitive’ due to its highly political content and nature, one often simply has to make do with the limitations imposed on the process and find work around that do not fill the gap with conjecture but rather work to bridge it differently. Further to this, Ludmilla Jordanova speaks of ‘the cult of the archive’ amongst historians and how it can distort how the archival material is interpreted and later used in historical writing. She goes on to describe an implied “kind of intimacy with particular aspects of the past that are more personal, individual, private and hence worth looking at precisely because they concern ‘real life’” as well as playing to the romanticised notion of the material not having been looked at or used extensively.⁵¹ This can give one an overinflated sense of importance not only as a historian but can also feed into the writing process if the materials have not been thoroughly analysed, interpreted and criticised in the same way that we do to other kinds of sources.

Sources and literature aside but still in the back of one’s mind, every effort has been made to maintain an empathetic but not excusatory view of a figure who proactively used her given advantages in life while earnestly believing she was making a valuable contribution to her *volk*. The roles of her family and friends and their relationships with one another helped to shape a

⁵⁰ J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, pp. 65-66.

⁵¹ L. Jordanova, *History in Practice*. Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 187.

fiery and fiercely independent Afrikaner woman who always aimed to serve her people and her family in equal measure. The first chapter of this work covers the most formative years of her life, from her earliest days in the looming shadow of the South African War, the Steyn family's extended stay in Europe followed by her schooling career and her eventual marriage to the handsome doctor 12 years her senior. The second chapter follows on from their grand nuptials to the young couple's move to the Cape and Emmie's subsequent adjustment to the city and those who inhabited it. This is also the period in which the du Toit's would have all four of their children and see Emmie honing her skills as a hostess and lady of the Cape social scene. The third chapter covers the most tumultuous years in South African politics and the roles that Emmie was allowed to play in the activities of the National Party. This includes her time in the women's party, the *Nasionale Vroue Party*, that was followed by her rise into the upper rungs of the bigger National Party in a time where women were allowed to hold their own in explicitly political spheres. Finally, the fourth chapter deals with Emmie's departure from the party and a stark shift of her views to the right of the political spectrum in favour of the nefarious *Ossewabrandwag* (OB) and the visions they held for a South African republic. This is but a glimpse of Emmie du Toit and the fruitful and tireless life that she lived working for her *volk* and their betterment while maintaining her place as a member of the social and political Afrikaner elite in the Cape.

Chapter One – The earliest years, 1898-1919

“These people are lovers of their country, and they have a country worthy of their love. This is the secret of their willingness to fight and die for it.”⁵²

The opening pages of this work aim to illustrate the world and family in which Emmie du Toit was born into. Her earliest years were marred by the realities of the South African War that resulted in an extended stay in Europe with the rest of her family before returning to South Africa to begin her formal schooling career. The 21 years covered in this chapter deal with loss, love and the development of an altogether outspoken and impassioned young woman ready to take on anything the world threw at her.

There are few families within Afrikanerdom held in quite so high esteem as the Steyn's. The name carries with it both the nostalgia and the pain of the Anglo-Boer War, particularly when remembering its most notable bearer, Marthinus Theunis.⁵⁴ Steyn is epitomised as the fierce defender of his *volk*, an exemplary and diplomatic statesman and as a forward-thinking leader who fought alongside his men on the front lines while serving as their last president of the then Orange Free State Republic (hereafter OFS). His wife Rachel Isabella (born Fraser) but known to most as Tibbie, was an outspoken advocate of Afrikaner values in her own right and was characterised by her unwavering and selfless devotion to her husband, family and *volk*.

The two had met on the 5th of June 1877, a decade before their formal courtship when both were aboard the *Dunbin Castle* to Europe, Steyn on his way to continue his studies in the Netherlands at Leiden and Tibbie accompanying her father, Ds. Colin McKenzie Fraser of Philippolis and the rest of their family to Scotland to attend the Pan-Presbyterian Council.⁵⁵ They would come to be reacquainted in 1884, marking the beginning of their devoted and endearing relationship that culminated in their marriage on the 10th of March 1887, an event noted as having been the largest and most glamorous event to grace the small town of

⁵² Viscount Bryce quoted in K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou: die lewe van pres. en mev. M.T. Steyn*, p. 30. Bryce was a liberal English politician who visited the Orange Free State and described its inhabitants as such. He was also outspoken in his condemnation of the treatment of Boers by the British in the war.

⁵⁴ The war is now referred to as the South African War but for the purposes of this text it will be referred to by its former name given that this is the prevailing term used in the majority of the sources consulted.

⁵⁵ E. Truter: Tibbie: Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1865-1955: Haar lewe was haar boodskap, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 12. Paul Kruger as vice-president of the Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek (ZAR) was also on board as part of a delegation to England to petition Shepstone's declaration of the annexation of the ZAR.

Philippolis.⁵⁶ The newlyweds settled together in Bloemfontein where Steyn had been practising as a lawyer for several years alongside Tibbie's uncle Sir John Fraser and Jack Brebner (later Senator) and came to be a highly respected member of the legal community. Before his entry into formal politics, Steyn served as the Attorney General as well as a circuit magistrate which saw him travel extensively in the OFS with Tibbie accompanying him on many of these trips, one of which overlapped with their honeymoon.⁵⁷

Prior to their marriage and the arrival of their children, Steyn had bought a home on the corner of Douglas and Green streets in Bloemfontein. The property was across from his parents whose own house Green Lodge had come to be known as a gathering place for young people in Bloemfontein.⁵⁸ It was not an exceptionally large house but it served their needs and as a keen gardener, Steyn took great pleasure and care in tending the sizeable garden often bringing clippings in to his wife.⁵⁹ The young couple were well acquainted with local families like the Fischer's and the Fichardt's as well as several others, relationships that their own children would continue.⁶⁰ A notable aspect of their social lives, both as a married couple and as individuals, was the integration of English and Afrikaans speaking friends and acquaintances with a circle of friends that was wide and consisted of individuals from numerous backgrounds.⁶² Of his relationships it is said that "there was no boredom in Steyn's company and for this reason his friends were many and friendship was warm and deep" and that "it strikes one that though [he] was to be hailed as the Afrikaner of the Afrikaners, the majority of his closest friends were of English descent".⁶³ Both Tibbie and her husband were seen as affable and humorous people who enjoyed welcoming and entertaining people in their home, together.

⁵⁶ *The Friend*, 23 March 1887.

⁵⁷ M.C.E., van Schoor: *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 24.

⁵⁸ E. Truter: *Tibbie*, p. 27. The Fichardt's and Fischer's were well known families in the Free State with both having been key people in the Bloemfontein business and social scenes.

⁵⁹ M.C.E., van Schoor: *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 36.

⁶⁰ Emmie retained correspondence with these families for many years following her parents deaths. See KAB A969 Boxes 1, 2 and 13.

⁶² Tibbie's family was Scottish with the family corresponding with one another predominantly in English. Steyn had forgone writing his entrance exams in Leiden in favour of moving to England wherein he completed his legal training so as to be able to qualify to practice in English. Steyn himself wrote of his intention to do so given his awareness of the limits of his knowledge of the Dutch language. See M.C.E., van Schoor, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*.

⁶³ J. Meintjes: *President Steyn*, p. 39.

Not long after their nuptials, their first child, Colin Fraser was born on the 27th of November 1887. Colin, a Fraser family name held by Tibbie's father, grandfather and older brother, would be their only son and the elder sibling to four sisters who followed in the decade after his birth. Cecelia Johanna, known as Hannah, arrived on the 25th of April 1889, followed by Gladys Evelyn on the 12th of December 1890 and Isabella Gordon (Tibbie) on the 26th of August 1895. The family had remained in their first home up until this point with Steyn continuing his work as a barrister that culminated in him being made a judge of the High Court in 1893. He had also been a keen observer of Free State political activity and remained well informed on the day-to-day happenings within the Republic. On the 11th of December 1895, President F.W. Reitz tendered his resignation to the Volksraad due to ill-health that had been plaguing him for many months. Steyn stood for office as the representative for the Afrikaner Bond, the pro-Dutch and anti-Imperialist party that had a strong hold in the Free State, with Steyn winning the election in what one could call a landslide victory of 6 877 votes to J.G Fraser's 1 367.⁶⁴ The 4th of March 1896 saw Steyn being inaugurated as the fifth president of the Orange Free State in the "Tweetering" (two tower) church in Bloemfontein.

With his election came the need for the family to move into the presidential home, a far more expansive and stately home than what they had lived in previously. It was however, not without its issues. Tibbie had to make do with a lack of a proper sanitation or electrical system in the home and had to provide many of the furnishings from their own home that included their furniture, silverware and linens.⁶⁵ Even with these inconveniences, she took to her role as the president's wife as naturally as one would expect and made every effort to make the new environment work for their needs as a family, given that their children were all still under the age of ten. The rest of the property was essentially a children's paradise with an expansive garden that had not been entirely tamed, rows of orchards and a swimming pool.⁶⁶ Steyn for his own part was as active in his children's lives for as much as time and circumstance would permit. He allowed his children to be part and parcel of their lives and did not subscribe to the Victorian ideal of having children seen rather than heard nor were they kept out of sight when guests were present. A family friend recalled Steyn "romp[ing] around the table in the dining

⁶⁴ K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 28. Fraser was one of Tibbie's uncles with whom Steyn had been in practice.

⁶⁵ E. Truter, *Handhaaf*, June 1990, p. 14.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

room with his youngest child carried shoulder high and the rest chasing him and shouting with delight” with another recalling him to be “essentially a domestic man”.⁶⁷

As she had done so before the election to office, Tibbie fulfilled the role of a first-rate hostess and housekeeper. With Steyn’s propensity for conversation and sharing his thoughts and interests with his many companions, Tibbie had to ensure that she was always prepared to entertain the guests that he had invited to their home, often unexpectedly. It is said that “she was never put out and became known for her gracious hospitality and the excellence of her table”, aspects of her life and demeanour that she would come to pass on to her daughters.⁶⁸ The two were partners in life in the most earnest sense of the term. While she fulfilled the role of doting mother and wife, her approach to life and her actions went beyond the traditional and narrow view of what was expected of her, particularly in the late Victorian era. Steyn viewed Tibbie as his intellectual equal, save for still seeing women as politically and socially subordinate in the grander scheme.⁶⁹

Their home was a remarkably busy one and the final addition to their family made it all the more so. The 12th of January 1898 marked the birth of Emeline Johanna, affectionately known as Emmie throughout her life. The only one of the Steyn children to be born in the presidential home, Emmie’s birth rendered Tibbie almost entirely invalid, unsurprising given her small frame and relatively frequent ill-health in the many years prior.⁷⁰ Around this same time Steyn purchased a farm in Kaalspruit, roughly 20km outside of Bloemfontein and named it *Onze Rust*. He set about having fruit and other trees planted around the expansive property that had a modest but beautiful homestead at its core. Nestled behind a small *koppie* [hill], the space was enough for their family and any guests they wished to entertain, many of whom came away

⁶⁷ K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 30.

⁶⁸ J. Meintjes: *President Steyn*, p. 46.

⁶⁹ C. de Wet, E. van Heyningen & C. van der Merwe: *Selections from the letters of President M.T. Steyn, 1904-1910*, p. xxix. Steyn was known to be a supporter of women’s suffrage when the issue was raised in later years.

⁷⁰ K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 33. Schoeman claims that Emmie was one in a set of twins, the other half of whom did not survive. This has not been corroborated in any other source material to date and will therefore not be held to be true.

speaking only high praise for their “*Ongekroonde Koning*” or Uncrowned King.⁷¹ *Onze Rust* became the homestead to which they always returned and the safe haven they retreated to in times of turmoil.

The months that followed Emmie’s birth were not easy for the Steyn family as a collective. Given her condition, Tibbie was sent away to Sea Point in Cape Town in an effort to recuperate with the coastal air and a change of scenery, remaining there with some of the children until the 14th of February 1899.⁷² After her baptism in the “Tweetoring” church on the 10th of March 1898, Emmie was sent to Colin and Nettie Fraser, Tibbie’s oldest brother and his wife who lived in the Wepener district.⁷³ At the same time, Steyn had been attempting to act as a mediator between Paul Kruger’s “Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek” (ZAR) and Sir Alfred Milner’s government.⁷⁴ Tensions between the two had been running high for a number of years and were compounded by events like the Jameson Raid that served only to further polarise citizens of the Republics and the Colonies.⁷⁵ Steyn arranged for a conference comprised of himself, Kruger and Milner in May 1899, but negotiations quickly broke down and saw both the ZAR and the British issue ultimatums that were not met.⁷⁶ On the 11th of October 1899, war was officially declared, with the OFS under Steyn’s leadership supporting their northern counterparts in the defence of their Republics.⁷⁷

Due to the turbulent nature immediately before the declaration of war, Steyn had not been able to spend as much time with the youngest of his children as what he did with the others. His

⁷¹ C. de Wet (et al.): *Selections from the letters of President M.T. Steyn, 1904-1910*, p. xxix. Steyn was referred to as such by private secretary and close friend, Jack Brebner and was the title of a poem by Anna Purcell, a friend of Olive Schreiner, dedicated to Steyn on his arrival in Europe in 1902 (J. Meintjes: *President Steyn*, p.196.). A similar reference was made to him during the founding congress of the *Helpmekaarvereniging van die Kaapprovinsie* in June 1916 when M.J. van der Walt, representative of Steynsburg, referred to him as “*de ongekroonde koning niet alleen van de O.V.S., maar van geheel de Unie*” [the uncrowned king, not only in the Orange Free State, but of the whole Union] (Minutes of the first congress of the *Helpmekaarvereniging van die Kaapprovinsie*, 28-29 June 1916, p. 10.) in A Ehlers, “The Helpmekaar: Rescuing the “*volk*” through reading, writing and arithmetic, c.1916–c.1965”, *Historia*, (60), (2), November 2015, p. 108.

⁷² E. Truter: *Tibbie*, p. 38.

⁷³ *Die Burger Byvoegsel*, 4 October 1957, p. 3.

⁷⁴ Milner was a British colonial administrator and Governor of the Cape Colony between 1897 and 1901. After the loss of the Transvaal and OFS to the British, Milner served first as administrator and later as governor of the two former republics.

⁷⁵ The Jameson Raid was a failed attempt to incite an uprising of British expatriate workers in the Transvaal against the government of Paul Kruger in 1895/6. The failure, under the leadership of British statesman Sir Leander Starr Jameson, was of immense embarrassment for the British government and saw the resignation of Cecil John Rhodes as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony and growth in mistrust between the British and the two Boer republics, effectively serving as a major contributing factor towards the outbreak of the South African War.

⁷⁶ K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 35.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

focus and responsibilities lay elsewhere, and he left his family in the hope that it would not be long until he saw them again. Back in Bloemfontein, Tibbie was warned ahead of the British advance on the city and fled the Presidency with the children on the 10th of March 1900. Three days later the city had been captured with Steyn only having left the previous day. The family moved as one, following the relocation of the government to Kroonstad where they remained for several weeks.⁷⁸ They then travelled to Pretoria for a short while, even staying in the home of an English-speaking agent who alongside several other individuals, questioned why Tibbie had refused the chance to flee to Europe where there was known sympathy for the Boer cause. Despite opportunities to do so, she made it clear that her only option was to remain as close as possible to her husband and the people they represented.⁷⁹

Their time in Pretoria was limited and they soon made their way back to the Free State, spending six weeks in the eastern town of Vrede until such time as it became unsafe for them to do so. Steyn found himself briefly reunited with his family in Reitz before seeing them off on their way to Bethlehem. By this point, their nomadic existence knew no bounds and after only two weeks, General Christiaan de Wet suggested that they move to Fouriesburg, then the temporary capital of the Republic, out of concern for their safety.⁸¹ His suggestion could not have come at a better time as Bethlehem fell into British hands mere days after their departure. Throughout their constant trek to avoid capture, people had opened up their homes, allowing them to stay with them and help look after the family. Tibbie had made every effort to minimise the effects of an incredibly disruptive and likely frightening time for her children, even going so far as to unpack all of their belongings at every chance so as to give some impression of normality.⁸²

⁷⁸ K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, pp. 36-37.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

On the 14th of July 1900, Steyn bade farewell to his family and left Fouriesburg to lead from the front. Tibbie's parting words to Steyn were as patriotic and true to character as one can imagine:

“Gaan maar...ons sal wel klaar kom. Dink maar nie aan ons. Laat hul met jou en ons maak, wat hul wil, maar hou aan tot die bitter einde...[Go now. We will be okay. Don't think about us. Let them do what they will to you and us but hold on to the bitter end]”.⁸³

It would be nearly two years before the family would be reunited, albeit in far more dire circumstances. On the 26th of July, Fouriesburg was officially captured by the British with Tibbie and the children staying in the home of a Mrs. Nowers at the time.⁸⁴ A British soldier came to the house in search of food and instead found himself being confronted by a 12-year-old Colin who was steadfast in his assurance that he was not afraid of the army and its intentions. Upon reporting back to his superior, the same soldier observed that a guard had promptly been placed outside of the house to ensure that “the family would not be disturbed by the troops passing through”.⁸⁵ There appeared to be a fundamental understanding that the President's family were to be treated with respect, a factor that remained throughout the different phases of the war and the family's interactions with “the enemy”.

Even with this understanding, Tibbie was interred as “the first female prisoner of war for the British forces” and the family was promptly sent back to Bloemfontein under military guard.⁸⁶ She initially believed that they would be allowed to return to *Onze Rust* but soon came to realise that she was their prisoner and would have to comply with their orders, describing the decision as highly upsetting and saddening.⁸⁷ To add insult to injury, Tibbie was barred from travelling to see Hannah who had been in Philippolis visiting her grandparents before the fall of Bloemfontein. She was eventually reunited with her eldest daughter several weeks later, with Colin choosing to return with his grandparents after having grown tired of the strain of living in an occupied town under constant surveillance.⁸⁸

⁸³ K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 39.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* & E. Truter: *Tibbie*, p. 45.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Quoted from Tibbie's memoirs in E. Truter: *Tibbie*, p. 48. Colin had returned to Bloemfontein by mid-July of 1901.



Figure 1: Tibbie Steyn (centre) with her sister Emeline Fraser at back. (L-R) Hannah, Emmie, Tibbie and Gladys sit at her feet while interred as prisoners-of-war in Bloemfontein.

The first three months of their internment were spent in the home of lawyer Melius De Villiers with the family being made to follow stringent rules that governed their everyday activities.⁸⁹ Tibbie was initially not permitted to roam around the surrounding area but was eventually granted permission for health reasons and used this time to visit friends, family and supporters in the surrounding area one of whom was a close confidant as well as her sister-in-law, Hannie Blignaut who lived several houses down.⁹⁰ Furthermore, they all required passes to travel and had a curfew of 22:00. Tibbie was not alone in her restrictions with the children not even being permitted to ride their bicycles in the area surrounding De Villiers' home.⁹¹ They were then required to leave his home to make room for two British Generals, but suitable housing was difficult to come by. After being made to rush their packing process, they were taken to a home that was far too small and derelict with Tibbie refusing to have her family live in such circumstances. The family was finally moved to a house in Zastron Street that was better suited to their needs.⁹²

⁸⁹ K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 40.

⁹⁰ Hannie was Steyn's sister and was instrumental in the Relief Committee (*Noodlenigingskampkomitee*) that raised funds and managed donations for women and children in the concentration camps.

⁹¹ E. Truter: *Tibbie*, p. 46.

⁹² K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 40.

In the spring of 1901, there was a very real threat of Tibbie being deported to Europe alongside the wives of five other Generals and politicians in a final effort by the British to bring their husbands to surrender. The family began preparing for the worst and began collating what few resources they could. Money had been carefully managed throughout the war with Tibbie using Steyn's salary to cover the family's expenses incurred while travelling and during their time in Bloemfontein.⁹³ These deportations never materialised but Tibbie had been sure to make Steyn aware of what was happening to her and their children. Those who were old enough to do so, wrote to their father and bade him farewell, hoping that they would receive a response or better yet, see him in person for the first time in more than a year.⁹⁴ A reunion would come sooner rather than later for the Steyn family with the war threatening to come to a British victory. The Boer troops could no longer hold out as they had once so fervently hoped to do with the beginning of the end being marked by the negotiations held in Klerksdorp in the April of 1902.⁹⁵ Steyn was in a terrible state having battled with double vision and reduced capabilities in his limbs in the last phase of the war but took part in the negotiations.⁹⁶ He resigned as president on the 29th of May and left for Krugersdorp before the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging and the official declaration of peace on the 31st of May 1902.⁹⁷

With news of the impending surrender, Tibbie made preparations to join Steyn in Krugersdorp, having only been given vague details of his health. She and the children were totally unprepared for the state in which they would find their husband and father. Colin and Gladys remained in Bloemfontein with Hannie while Hannah, Tibbie and Emmie travelled with their mother by train to meet him. Their reunion was bittersweet. Steyn had either developed myasthenia gravis, a long term neuromuscular disease, or botulism, an extreme form of food poisoning, both of which affect muscular strength in the eyes, face, throat and limbs. While on the front lines of the war, Steyn had been plagued by double vision and reduced limb capabilities with the stress of the safety of his family likely only adding to an already tense situation.⁹⁸ The symptoms of the disease had rendered the once-formidable figure nearly invalid with a total paralysis of his limbs and an inability to operate independently. It would not have been an easy sight for Tibbie

⁹³ E. Truter: *Tibbie*, p.55. Tibbie had also put money away for safekeeping in Bethlehem with a trusted friend and now drew on these funds in their preparations for the potential trip.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

⁹⁵ K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 56.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁹⁸ *The Star*, 7 December 1973, "Mysterious illness of President Steyn", p. 10. It was only in the 1970s that these two theories were put forward by doctors in an effort to put a name to the disease that affected Steyn for so many years.

and the children to bear with this being the first time Emmie remembered seeing her father when thinking back on the occasion decades later.⁹⁹ After climbing up on the bed to see him, Steyn asked who the small child was to which they replied, “*Dis Emmie. Het jy vergeet van haar?* [It’s Emmie. Have you forgotten her?]”.¹⁰⁰

Almost immediately, Tibbie wrote to Lord Kitchener requesting that the family be given passage and the relevant paperwork to travel to Europe in an attempt to treat Steyn. At the same time, calls for donations were put out to the public to help finance the family’s trip. Arthur E. Fichardt wrote to Tibbie on the 10th of July and enclosed a cheque to the value of £1 000 that had been collected in Cape Town, East London and Bloemfontein.¹⁰¹ This was one of dozens of contributions and donations made towards the family both before their departure and during their travels. Kitchener timeously granted Tibbie’s request and went so far as to request that “she must have every comfort on the journey”.¹⁰² Steyn travelled down from Krugersdorp with his doctor and members of his staff arriving in Cape Town on the 11th of July with Tibbie, the five Steyn children and Miss Hannie Richter arriving several days later after having first returned to Bloemfontein to pack their belongings.¹⁰³ On the 16th of July the party set off on the *Carisbrook Castle* with every hope that the coming months would help restore some sense of normality to their lives. To a four-year-old Emmie, the trip would be unforgettable.¹⁰⁴

Upon their arrival in Southampton on the 1st of August, the group was met by a party led by Abraham Fischer, an old friend and OFS statesman who had been in Europe soliciting support for the Boer cause, who helped to transfer them to the *Batavier III*, a Dutch boat that sailed on to the Netherlands.¹⁰⁵ They were later joined by Tibbie’s younger brother, Gordon Fraser, who at 16 years her junior had become incredibly close to the couple and was utterly adored by the children. Gordon had also been captured as a prisoner-of-war and was interred in Pretoria

⁹⁹ *Ossewabrandwag* Archive: K342, 97-98, transcribed interview with Mrs E.J. du Toit, 23 April 1975, p. 41. This interview will henceforth be referred to as ‘OB transcript’.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Letter from Arthur Fichardt to Tibbie Steyn, 10 July 1902 in K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 65.

¹⁰² Quoted in Tibbie’s memoirs in K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 60.

¹⁰³ K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 66. Hannie Richter, often referred to as ‘Miss Hannie’, was a close friend of Tibbie’s who offered to help with looking after the children and served as their governess. They were also accompanied by Cornelius du Preez who had served Steyn as his adjunct during the war and had been at his side with the onset of his illness.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

before being moved to Bermuda in 1901.¹⁰⁶ The first stop was in the coastal town of Scheveningen with the two oldest girls, Hannah and Gladys being sent to Baarn and Colin being sent to Utrecht shortly thereafter. The remaining party moved on to Clarens in Switzerland and later settled in Reichenhall in May of 1903 where the younger Tibbie and Emmie attended school, a first for the youngest Steyn.¹⁰⁷ During their stay, they were visited by a number of guests, one of whom was the young D.F. Malan who had made the journey from Utrecht where he was completing his doctoral studies. Malan joined the family on a number of occasions and grew to see them as close friends and confidants.¹⁰⁸ The relationship would continue throughout Malan's life with him and Emmie becoming close friends several years later.

In each of these towns, their father was receiving the highest care possible and was slowly but surely being nursed back to health and regaining his mobility and independence. The girls were kept busy both with school and by Miss Hannie, described as the “guardian angel of the little ones”, who helped to ease the burden and ensure that Tibbie could focus her energy on Steyn and his treatment.¹⁰⁹ In October they moved once again, this time to Cannes in the French Riviera where the youngest girls would attend yet another new school. The group also spent time in Heidelberg and Günterstal, a town near Freiburg in the south of Germany. At school Emmie had observed her fellow students attending mass and taking communion and could not bring herself to understand why she and her sister were not allowed to take part. Never being one to be far from mischief, 5-year-old Emmie roped 7-year-old Tibbie into her plan to become a Catholic, if only for the day. While walking past a statue of Mary that their classmates genuflected at, the two seized the opportunity and knelt before it, making the sign of the cross as they went.¹¹⁰ A small oversight in their plan was the fact that their governess Miss Hannie had been walking with them and the devout Calvinist was less than impressed with their behaviour. Naturally, their parents were the first to hear of their act with Steyn taking a remarkably lax approach to disciplining his daughters, “*Bo al, moenie vir Emmie slaan nie, nie oor daardie ding nie...* [Above all, do not spank Emmie, not over this thing...]¹¹¹ Emmie seems

¹⁰⁶ E. Truter: *Tibbie*, p. 77. Tibbie's mother, father and sister were all imprisoned at various stages during the war with her father being arrested twice in the space of several weeks.

¹⁰⁷ OB transcript, p. 41.

¹⁰⁸ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁰⁹ E. Truter: *Tibbie*, p. 69.

¹¹⁰ *Die Burger Byvoegsel*, 4 October 1957, p. 3.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

to have believed that had he taken a harder line, it would have only spurred on her burgeoning rebellious nature.¹¹²

While in Günterstal in the April of 1904, Tibbie and Steyn made the decision to send the majority of the party back to South Africa while they were advised to travel around Europe. The trip had already been immensely costly and would only be more so the longer that they all stayed in Europe, even with the numerous donations that had continued to be sent to support them.¹¹³ Their financial burdens had been somewhat eased by the generosity of friends like Abraham Fischer and Louis Botha who made personal contributions alongside the waiving of treatment fees by Dr Winckler who had performed substantial treatments on Steyn. It was decided that Gordon, Hannie, Colin, Tibbie and Emmie would return in June while Hannah and Gladys remained at school in Baarn until their parents would return with Cornelius at a later stage.¹¹⁴ By July, Colin had returned to his father's alma mater Grey College to matriculate with Tibbie and Emmie being sent to the Fraser's in Philippolis.¹¹⁵



On the 25th of January 1905, Steyn, Tibbie, Hannah and Gladys began their journey back to South Africa after having been away for close to three years. They were joined on board the *Kronprinz* by D.F. Malan and Helen Botha (daughter of General Louis Botha) with their arrival at Cape Town harbour on the 18th of February being a most welcome one with friends and supporters lining the dock to greet them.¹¹⁶ The family, joined by Emily Hobhouse who had returned to South Africa to open her weaving and spinning schools, boarded the train that would take them back to their safe haven, *Onze Rust*.

Figure 2: Emmie and Tibbie in London, n.d.

¹¹² *Die Burger Byvoegsel*, 4 October 1957, p. 3.

¹¹³ There are numerous accounts of donations being made in the literature surrounding their trip. There are conflicting total amounts given in these accounts, one of which is from Emmie's interview in 1975, where she states the amount being as high as £8 000 which may have been very likely, OB transcript p. 41.

¹¹⁴ Tibbie Steyn – Jaap De Villiers, 14 April 1904 in C. de Wet (et al): *Selections from the letters of President M.T. Steyn, 1904-1910*, p. 17.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Amongst the crowd were a number of familiar faces that included Jan Smuts, Abraham Fischer and 'Onze' Jan Hofmeyr. See K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trouw*, pp. 110-111.

The trip was defined by the dozens of people who gathered at the numerous stops to pay their respects to the family as they passed through with Hobhouse commenting that “[Steyn] belonged to them, and they to him absolutely...”.¹¹⁷ At Norvalspont, south of Philippolis, Emmie and Tibbie climbed aboard the train with Gordon, General de Wet, General Hertzog, Jack Brebner and what must have felt like the vast majority of the Bloemfontein social scene for the trip back into Bloemfontein itself.¹¹⁸ The family eventually made the final leg of their trip to Kaalspruit that would bring them that much closer to home.

Onze Rust had been spared by the British troops during their implementation of the Scorched Earth policy with a new farmhouse being built in 1904 shortly before their return. Readjusting to a ‘new normal’ of no longer being the first family of the Free State would likely have taken some time but their humble and modest attitude towards life kept their focus firmly on regaining their routine. The house was consistently busy with a steady stream of visitors all of whom had to be entertained by Tibbie and Steyn. By this stage, only Cornelius had remained as a member of their ‘team’ with a young Miss Coward, a former teacher at the Damesinstituut (now Eunice Girls School and Tibbie’s alma mater) in Bloemfontein being employed to serve as Emmie and Tibbie’s governess.¹¹⁹ Finances were an initial concern given that Steyn had not earned a salary since the outbreak of the war and that much of the donated funds had been spent on the remainder of Tibbie and Steyn’s European travels without the rest of the family. The President Steyn Gedenkfonds was started in the Free State to raise funds to support the family upon their return which was bolstered by generous donations sourced by Generals Hertzog and De Wet amongst others.¹²⁰ In 1907, the Free State was granted self-governance and with it came the granting of a pension to Steyn.¹²¹ They would never be an abundantly wealthy family, a notion that in reality would have been furthest from who the Steyn’s truly were but were now able to live comfortably without the fear of not being able to meet their needs.

Education and a furthering of oneself were important aspects of life for the family and they spared no cost in ensuring their children’s involvement therein. After months of planning and organisation the Oranje Meisieskool in Bloemfontein was opened on the 2nd of August 1907 with classes already having begun on the 11th of April. The project to fund the building of the

¹¹⁷ M.C.E., van Schoor: *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 303.

¹¹⁸ K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 111.

¹¹⁹ E. Truter: *Tibbie*, p. 85.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

school was driven by Steyn who sought to establish a school for girls in the wake of the war so as to provide them with further opportunities for quality education. Tibbie served as the organising secretary and helped to raise funds for its construction. Three of the 25 ‘foundation boarders’ who moved onto the expansive property at the foot of Naval Hill were a 16-year-old Gladys, an 11-year-old Tibbie and an angelic 9-year-old Emmie.¹²² The accounts of Emmie’s time at Oranje are fleeting but those that are available paint a picture of a remarkably strong-willed and passionate young girl who was not averse to speaking her mind. In a letter to her grandmother in Philippolis dated the 24th of August 1909, Emmie is less than impressed by the discipline being enforced upon her for writing a letter to her mother during study period. Never being one to mince her words, an 11-year-old Emmie paints quite the picture of life at Oranje:

“Dearest Grannie,

Ah! Grannie you are quite happy, but your youngest granddaughter is very unhappy. Just because I wrote to mother during study. Without permission. And I all the time thought Miss Laura knew all about it but I was very much mistaken she knew nothing about it...about ten to nine Miss Le Roux comes into the study room and asked what I was doing here. Then Miss Laura Fourie said “Emmie tell Miss Le Roux about your sin”...so she said why did I do it and whether I did not know that I was allowed to do it. I said yes I knew it very well and why did you do it then. Because I said if I don’t do it now my letter will never reach Mammie. Then she said there was surely no Saturday and Sunday then I said that I could not write on a Sunday. She gave me a conduct mark and said that I had to stay here with leave out which is on a Saturday. Grannie my love and faith in the Oranje has quite faded and I feel very miserable. I know my Grannie will write me a letter to comfort me but Grannie my heart is very heavy and I am longing for mother and father to come home to me. But my Grannie I know will comfort her little granddaughter and if it was not that I could have someone to tell my trouble I would have been at a loss. Oh! But my dearest Grannie what must I do mother is far from me, Grannie is far and uncle Gordon I can’t see to tell him. I’ll try Grannie for Grannie’s sake and for my own to keep up. Oh if only God will only help me out of my trouble. I will be like and happy but now at present everything seems dark and I am tired of crying.

Goodbye my only dearest grandparents. God bless you all.

I remain your loving grandchild. God will help me.

Emmie”.¹²³

¹²² *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 October 1969, “Emmie du Toit glo aan ‘n ‘teetafel”, p. 76. The not-quite 18-year-old Hannah was married to Everard Fichardt on the 12th of April 1907 in the Tweekoring church, Bloemfontein in a joint ceremony with Percy Fischer and Ella Fichardt (Everard’s sister) who would go on to be the parents of anti-apartheid lawyer Bram Fischer.

¹²³ Cape Archive Repository (KAB): J.S. du Toit Collection, henceforth referred to as KAB A969. Box 24, Emmie – Isabella Fraser, 24 August 1909. Steyn and Tibbie were travelling as part of the delegation to the United Kingdom with Botha, Smuts and Merriman to petition for the establishment of the Union. The letter as it appears above has not been translated or edited and is a verbatim rendition of the original that was written in English.

Being one of the youngest to join the newly established school was not an easy adjustment for Emmie or her mother. Tibbie had attempted to keep the two youngest girls on the farm for as long as possible but also knew that sending them to school would be best for their development. Emmie continued her studies in the European languages she had learned to speak during the family's travels, namely French and German while general instruction at the school was dual-medium with the six teachers giving their lessons in both Dutch and English. The girls were boarders and were housed in dormitories in accordance with their ages with Tibbie and Emmie being able to board together with the other 9 to 12-year-old girls, in a room nicknamed "the long dormitory" by its inhabitants.¹²⁴ The boarding house was not yet equipped with facilities that allowed for hot water, a rude awakening that came with a 06:30 start followed by breakfast and a rush to make beds and shine shoes for the day ahead.¹²⁵

A "soft and lovely person" in the form of Miss Claudie Pienaar was Emmie's first teacher whom she admired for the fact that she was not an "old school type" and made their school going days bearable.¹²⁶ They were joined by two "*vabonde*" or rogues in their class, the two Louie's (Boshoff and Du Toit) at whom Emmie spent much of her time laughing to the point of landing herself in trouble with her teachers.¹²⁷ Mischief seems to have followed Emmie throughout her eight years at the school. Being one of the youngest of such a small group of girls also meant that she was often the target of the older girls and their 'games'. One night, after being nominated or rather coerced by some of the slightly older girls in their dormitory, Emmie used her nightgown to turn herself into a chicken only to be caught by none other than their headmistress Miss le Roux who had come to check on the youngest in her charge. Upon hearing her approaching footsteps, the rest of the girls dove back into their beds with Emmie, who had been caught up in her nightgown, only making it as far as the crawlspace of someone else's bed. Upon surveying the room, Miss le Roux immediately noticed her absence and naturally asked where young Emmie was. Inexplicably, one girl claimed she had gone to bath at that late hour not realising that the 'tail' of Emmie's chicken get-up was sticking out from under her hiding place, giving her coveted position away. The game was up, and Emmie heard the words that she came to know a little too well, "Be in my study tomorrow after breakfast".¹²⁸

¹²⁴ KAB A969 Box 15, Emmie speech to Oranje students, 1957.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

Another such occasion reared its head when Emmie was once again in the ‘study’ where students who had transgressed were relegated. This time however, the joke appears to have taken a slightly more malicious turn. While the housekeeper Mrs Engelbrecht was repacking and organising the linen cupboard, Emmie was pushed inside with the door being closed behind her. To her horror, a rattling and rustling she had not exactly been expecting could be heard, immediately believing it to be a snake that was now sharing the dark cramped space in which she had been confined. As most people would, Emmie burst out of the unlocked cupboard, running herself straight into an unsuspecting Mrs Engelbrecht who very nearly keeled over backwards with fright. Between the two of them they had made enough noise to garner the attention of those in the staffroom as well as Miss le Roux and without so much as an explanation, Emmie was sent running to her room by her headmistress and told to stay there, while her terrifying cupboard companion was found to be nothing more than a small field mouse.¹²⁹

The girls were at Oranje during some of the most important developments of the early 20th century that included the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and the outbreak of the First World War. The year 1914 would be a tumultuous one in global and South African history with the war rendering international travel difficult, if not impossible. At the time, Hannah and Everard had been in Switzerland with their four children in an effort to seek medical help for Everard’s failing health and were now stranded in Europe, causing great concern to Tibbie and the rest of the family. In the same year, the Boer Rebellion of Maritz and de Wet broke out, sending an already tense Union into disarray. The involvement of their close friend and confidant General de Wet was of great concern to the Steyn’s given how much he had helped them, particularly during the war. Steyn attempted to once again act as a mediator to no avail with the deep concern for his country and people taking a toll on an already fragile body. *Onze Rust* was flooded with guests and visitors during this time accompanied by streams of correspondence. After taking them out of their hostel for the time being, Tibbie recruited her two youngest girls to help with looking after the house and answering the never-ending barrage of letters.¹³⁰ When they returned to school and in her own act of rebellion, a 16-year-old Emmie found herself on the wrong end of her father after having exchanged her maths homework in favour of venturing into political territory and writing her fellow students essays

¹²⁹ KAB A969 Box 15, Emmie speech to Oranje students, 1957.

¹³⁰ E. Truter: *Tibbie*, p. 133. Colin accompanied his father in visiting various Boer leaders at the time.

on the events and leaders of the rebellion, favouring the notion of, “Don’t hang the rebels, hang on to them”.¹³¹

In her own words 50 years later, Emmie looked on her school days with mixed feelings, “*Alhoewel ek nooit kan sê dat my skooljare die gelukkigste van my lewe was nie, kan ek tog bevestig dat ek baie gelukkig op Oranje was.*” [While I could never say that my school days were the happiest days of my life, I can confirm that I was very happy at Oranje].¹³² She had found herself at loggerheads with her teachers on multiple occasions which in turn affected her academic performance. After a particularly bad school report, she was adamant that she would not return to the halls of Oranje again.¹³³ Steyn offered his youngest daughter sage advice in that it would be better for her to deal with the problem once and for all as opposed to running away from it and having it catch up with her later.¹³⁴ Wise words from an old hand whose youngest child rather enjoyed capitalising on her opportunities to rebel.

Her last years at the school brought with them their own challenges and changes. The strain of her father’s illness on both his own life and that of her mother’s was something that remained in the back of Emmie’s mind and would have played a part in what she planned to do in the future. At the same time, she had been plagued with health issues of her own that resulted in having braces fitted to her legs in an effort to further correct her knees.¹³⁵ In her matric year, Steyn asked the most of his youngest child, for her to move back home, help look after the house and the family but most importantly help ease some of the burden on her mother. The onus fell on her as the younger Tibbie was a newlywed with a young Ds. N.J. van der Merwe, Gladys had no interest in marriage and had instead moved to Europe to study law, Hannah was married with five of her own children and Colin was not yet married but had been working as a lawyer and had entered formal politics as a member of the newly formed National Party.¹³⁶

¹³¹ *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 October 1969, “Emmie du Toit glo aan ‘n ‘teetafel’”, p 77.

¹³² KAB A969 Box 15, Emmie speech to Oranje students, 1957. As an adult, Emmie was remarkably vocal about just how much she resented her schooling years, particularly when recounting her time to her family (interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019). De Vos is Emmie’s grandson, the youngest son of her youngest daughter, Ileana. He spent a great deal of time with Emmie both as a child and as an adult and is in possession of many of the personal items and documents that were not placed in the du Toit collection in the KAB.

¹³³ *Die Burger Byvoegsel*, 4 October 1957, p. 3.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Emmie had worn leg and foot braces as a young child that were fitted to her during their stay in Europe. See letter from Ds. Colin Fraser – Tibbie Steyn 15 November 1903 in S. K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 85.

¹³⁶ In a letter from Tibbie Steyn to Emily Hobhouse, E. Truter: *Tibbie*, pp. 136-137. Gladys lived in London with Petronella van Heerden who later became the first female doctor in South Africa with Gladys becoming one of the first female advocates upon her return to the country.

Always being one to put family before anything else, Emmie left school before the year was over to fulfil her role as a devoted and faithful daughter all the while cherishing the fact that she would finally be rid of her arithmetic homework.¹³⁷

Life back at *Onze Rust* did not require extensive adjustment and Emmie took to her new role with a sense of responsibility and pride even going so far as to recall these days as some of the best of her life.¹³⁸ She was given the job of reading through the extensive correspondence that still arrived at the house, reciting it to her father whose own eyesight had never fully recovered. Having already been a voracious reader with a penchant for romance novels, the role came naturally to her. Despite not being the definition of a disciplinarian, Steyn was still relatively strict with his children with one of his rules being that Emmie could not read one of her novels before midday. When he did come across her reading a Florence Barclay work, he was quick to question why she would read such *onsin* [nonsense]. Not long after, Emmie came across Steyn's letters to Tibbie in which his deep affection and love for his wife was illustrated in his prose. After being quizzed by her father on the contents of her new reading material, Emmie quipped that he should "*luister tog bietjie hierdie klomp onsin: 'My dearest sweetheart'...*[listen to this little bit of nonsense: 'My dearest sweetheart...']".¹³⁹ She would never be one to miss an opportunity to take a chance and speak her mind.

¹³⁷ *Die Burger Byvoegsel*, 4 October 1957, p. 17.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*



Figure 3: The group that travelled Europe for close to three years. Back L-R: Cornelis du Preez; Gordon Fraser; Colin Steyn. Middle L-R: Hannah, Miss Hannie, Steyn, Tibbie, Gladys. Front L-R: Tibbie and Emmie

Despite there being a significantly smaller number of Steyn's in the house, there was still much work to do around the farm and a significant role fell to Emmie to play her part. When it was necessary for Steyn to travel, Emmie accompanied her parents and helped wherever she was needed. One of these trips was to the Cape where it was hoped that Tibbie would be able to recover from her latest bout of serious illness that doctors believed she might not survive. The family stayed with Hannah, Everard and their children in a house in Green Point where they had been for several weeks due to Everard's increasing involvement in the National Party.¹⁴⁰ During their stay in the Cape, Steyn was contacted by students from the Free State Seminary who requested an audience to address the esteemed statesmen while they had the chance. By Emmie's account, it seems that her father was not feeling entirely up to the task and asked his youngest daughter to fill the role for him instead, a part she happily played, "*Ek was skaars 17 jaar en ek sê toe, 'Ja, goed, ek sal dit met plesier doen'. En ek het dit oorgeneem...*[I was barely 17 years old and then I said 'Yes, good, I will do it with pleasure. And then I took it over!']".¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ OB transcript, p. 44.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The idea of speaking in front of crowds, albeit as small as this occasion, was Emmie's hope for her future. The political realm offered an opportunity to do just this and with it already having been a major part of her life it would be a natural path for her to follow. Her father warned of the realities of her chosen path, "*As jy in die politiek gaan en daarmee 'n ideaal wil dien, goed. Maar belonging vir wat jy doen, daarvoor moet jy nooit wag nie!*" [If you go into politics to serve an ideal, good. But a reward for what you do, that you must never wait on.]¹⁴² Emmie took this and many other lessons from her father to heart with an innate ability to recall his words to her.

The trip to the Cape was a somewhat rare excursion given Tibbie and Steyn's ill-health and in light of this, a great number of people in the Cape took the opportunity to meet with the esteemed statesman and his family. One such visitor was Hugo Naudé, the impressionist painter who hoped to paint a portrait of Steyn while he had the chance. Emmie recalls her father being hesitant to the idea, unsurprising given that many of his facial features and the muscles supporting them had been damaged by his illness. Naudé was married to the daughter of a Mrs. Brown, a pro-Boer British woman with whom Emmie had corresponded for many years, initially on behalf of her mother. In spite of his protests, Steyn was swayed to sit for the portrait by Mrs Brown's pro-Boer stance combined with Naudé's ingenious idea to have him sit on a platform above a normal eye line so as to minimise the effects of Steyn's drooping eyelids.¹⁴³

Having noticed Steyn's acute awareness around his eyes, Naudé contacted Dr. Jacques du Toit, an Edinburgh and London trained ophthalmologist recommended by Henry Fagan, with Mrs Brown suggesting that he accompany Naudé on his next visit to the family.¹⁴⁴ When the two arrived at the home, Emmie was standing at the door to greet them. Before Naudé had the opportunity to introduce either one of them, Jacques recognised the young woman in front of him as President Steyn's daughter and their hostess for the evening. When the party had wound down with many of the guests already on their way out of the door, Naudé and Jacques came to bid their hosts farewell and handover the portrait before the family left for the Free State the

¹⁴² *Die Burger Byvoegsel*, 4 October 1957, p. 17.

¹⁴³ OB transcript, p. 44.

¹⁴⁴ Fagan was a lawyer and later Member of Parliament, serving as Minister of Native Affairs under Hertzog. At this stage, Fagan was working at *Die Burger* and would have known Dr du Toit through their mutual dealings at the newspaper and the affiliated spaces that included the *Afrikander Koffiehuys*, a common meeting point for these men.

next day. Less than two years later, the clever doctor and his hostess would meet again, this time with far more exciting prospects.

Emmie and her parents were back at *Onze Rust* by the October of 1916, where they celebrated Steyn's birthday on the 2nd. Not being one to particularly enjoy being fussed over, Steyn insisted that he did not want a big celebration to be held but Emmie insisted on hosting a small gathering at the house. The family were joined by 25 guests that included Hertzog and Brebner amongst others, all of whom Steyn later thanked for attending and for remaining loyal friends over the many years. In his birthday toast he also gave thanks to his youngest daughter and admitted that he was glad to be surrounded by his friends and his family on such an occasion.¹⁴⁵ Steyn was due to give several addresses over the following weeks one of which was in Senekal on the 16th of December, then known as Dingaan's Day. He had already been struggling with heart pains, a problem that stressed an already sickly Tibbie and concerned the rest of the family who hoped that he would rather take the time to rest. Despite this, Steyn also agreed to address the Oranje Vroue Vereniging at the Women's Monument in Bloemfontein on the 28th of November.¹⁴⁶

Emmie longed to accompany her parents to this address, but Steyn asked that she stay behind on the farm with her grandmother, promising that she could join them on the trip to Senekal the following month. His parting words to his daughter were endearing and bode a happy reunion after the address:

“Nee Em, jy kan saam Senekal toe gaan. Vandag moet jy nou by die huis bly en vir my al die lekker stoute kos kook wat jou Moeder reken ek moenie meer eet nie. Onthou kerriefrikkadel en baie blatjang – hou dit vir my reg as ons terugkom” [No Em, you can come with to Senekal. Today you need to stay home and make all of the naughty treats that your mother reckons I should not eat anymore. Remember curried frikkadel and lots of chutney – keep it for me for when we come back]¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ *Die Burger Byvoegsel*, 4 October 1957, p. 17.

¹⁴⁶ Tibbie was chairwoman of the Vrouefederasie that governed the women's organisations in the four provinces, the Oranjevrouevereniging being the representative of the Orange Free State. The address was given at the Women's Monument whose own development and construction was originally suggested and spearheaded by Steyn in 1913.

¹⁴⁷ *Die Burger Byvoegsel*, 4 October 1957, p. 17.

While walking to the car, Steyn laughed and turned to Emmie and his mother-in-law and said:

“Iets baie wonderliks gaan vandag gebeur. Kyk, my ou vrou sit al in die motor en wag!
[Something really wonderful is going to happen today. Look, my wife (Tibbie) is already
sitting in the car waiting for me!]¹⁴⁸

At eleven o'clock the phone rang, Emmie answered it and was met with a request to speak to her grandmother. A visibly shocked Isabella Fraser turned to Emmie and simply said, “*Girlie, jou vader is siek*” [Girlie, your father is sick].¹⁴⁹ It had not yet crossed her mind that his state was any more serious than what they had all grown accustomed to, especially given that both of her parents had overcome various grave illnesses that threatened to claim their lives. Emmie and her grandmother then made the trip into Bloemfontein, with Emmie not understanding why all of the shops had been closed and flags raised to half-mast. They arrived at the house where Steyn had been moved to after having collapsed during his address. The younger Tibbie and her husband Nico van der Merwe were present at the Monument and had taken their mother away from the scene and brought her to the house. There they led Emmie to her while she sat motionless on a bench staring far out in front of her, “*Na al hierdie jare het ek verloor...*” [After all of these years I have lost] is all that Tibbie could muster with Emmie’s uncle confirming that her father had died.¹⁵⁰

The days that followed were spent with those closest to the family, reflecting on their father and leader who had been taken from them so suddenly. Five days after his passing, Tibbie and her five children took their usual seats in the front row of the “Tweetering” church to listen to their father being memorialised by Ds. Kestell.¹⁵¹ Prime Minister Louis Botha had arranged for a state funeral that saw a large procession follow on to the *Vrouemonument* where speeches were given by F.W. Reitz and Christiaan de Wet amongst others.¹⁵² Steyn was finally laid to rest at the foot of the monument where his legacy and life could be commemorated by all. In this period of reflection upon not only her father’s life, but also that of her own, Emmie wrote to a young Charles Robberts Swart, a long-time friend and future State President, about Steyn’s death and what it meant to her:

¹⁴⁸ In Tibbie’s memoirs in K. Schoeman: *In Liefde en Trou*, p. 137. Steyn was usually the one who was made to wait for his wife.

¹⁴⁹ *Die Burger Byvoegsel*, 4 October 1957, p. 17.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ M.C.E., van Schoor: *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 431.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 432.

“Dear Mr Swart,

Thank you very much for your friendly letter of understanding and sympathy. Yes, I cannot tell you how much of a shock it was for us that he was taken from us so suddenly. I still cannot believe that he is no longer with us – I am so sad that I was not there to listen to his last speech, but I was on the farm. Any father is missed terribly by his children, but I think that a father who is an invalid is missed three times more when his helplessness alone made the bond of love a narrower and deeper one. It was terrible that he left us so suddenly, but I think it is ten thousand times better than if he were to go through a long and difficult illness again. I am very glad that you and Mr (Klasie) Havenga were some of the last four who stood by him. It was very comforting to know that he was not alone and that he always had younger people standing behind him and I want to thank you for doing this. I am also very glad that he was taken to his resting place by six young men and that I knew many of them, I feel that he was carried from beginning to end by his friends and not by strangers. You will never know how happy I feel that he is buried at the *Vrouemonument*. Thank God that there will never be ground thrown over him. Today I still feel terribly sad and that is why I must now end my letter.

Thank you again for your kind words and letter.

With best wishes from

Emmie Steyn”¹⁵³

The family was once again struck by tragedy when less than five months after burying her father, Emmie’s beloved grandmother Isabella Fraser suffered a fatal heart attack. Emmie, her mother and grandmother had been at the Grand Hotel in Muizenberg since the March of 1917 with the hopes that a change of scenery and the Cape sea air would help in Tibbie’s recovery from the shock of Steyn’s death. Emmie was once again left to manage her mother while trying to process her own feelings around these unwelcome changes in her life. The two women would return to *Onze Rust* several weeks later to a now empty home and yet in true resilient Steyn fashion, Emmie and her mother seemed to fare well on their own.¹⁵⁴ The rest of her siblings were facing their own realities with Gladys having taken over as the headmistress of Oranje while Colin had been elected to Parliament and was no longer around as much as before. Hannah and the younger Tibbie both had their own young families to care for but still visited as often as what time would allow. The house was not always so quiet and the two still welcomed many visitors, Emmie honing the hostess skills she would later be known for while being helped on the property by farm manager Mr. Kotze and a number of black servants.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Archive for Contemporary Affairs henceforth referred to as ARCA: C.R. Swart collection, PV 18, 3/1/2, Emmie – C.R. Swart, 9 December 1916. The letter is written in an earlier form of Afrikaans that still has strong Dutch elements to it. The above is a direct translation by the author.

¹⁵⁴ Tibbie wrote to Emily Hobhouse in April 1918 that “somehow we are managing much better than we ever thought”, E. Truter: *Tibbie*, p. 148.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

One of the most important visitors to the house was a handsome ophthalmologist from the Cape whose own eye had been caught by Emmie almost exactly two years prior. The two had only met on one occasion after their initial meeting, when it was realised that Jacques had known Emmie's brother Colin while both men were studying in Europe and happened to play football against one another.¹⁵⁶ Under the guise of undertaking a "trip to see the land and its people", Jacques made a point to visit the Steyn stronghold to pay his respects to the family and more specifically, visit Emmie who was eager to see him once again.¹⁵⁷ What followed could be described as a whirlwind romance with the end of his week-long visit being crowned with the announcement of Emmie and Jacques' engagement on the 20th of May 1918. In Emmie's own mind, the swift decision to marry was not entirely out of the ordinary. At 20 years-old and with two of her sisters having been married at 17 and 18 respectively, she appears to have felt ready to begin this next phase of her life.¹⁵⁸ Jacques was 12 years older than her, had already established himself and his medical practice in Cape Town and could provide stability and a new sense of excitement for the dynamic young Free Stater.

Jacobus Stephanus du Toit, known as Jacques, to almost all who knew him, was born on the 5th of March 1886 to a well-established but not remarkably wealthy farming family in Worcester. His father, also Jacobus Stephanus, was involved in local business and politics and held shares in several enterprises that emerged in the expansion of joint stock or limited liability companies at the time.¹⁵⁹ His mother died when he was a young boy and his father re-married soon thereafter and went on to father several children with his second wife. At the passing of his maternal grandfather, a sizable sum of money was left to Jacques and meant that he could pursue further studies after having completed his schooling in Worcester. His inheritance allowed for three years' worth of study and board, with medicine being his course of choice and Edinburgh serving as the university that appealed to him most.¹⁶⁰ Upon completing his MB Ch.B., he moved to Salisbury to begin work as a general practitioner where a supervising doctor noticed his innate ability and remarkable skill as a surgeon. He then suggested that he try his hand at ophthalmology and speak to a Sir Richard Crooks of Harley Street, who also happened to serve as the eye specialist to the King of England.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ KAB Box 16 - clipping from Leiden University magazine n.p, n.d,

¹⁵⁷ *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 October 1969, "Emmie du Toit glo aan 'n 'teetafel'", p. 77.

¹⁵⁸ This is implied in her very brief description of one of the earliest phases of their relationship in the OB transcription, p. 45.

¹⁵⁹ See Limited Companies record collection at the KAB.

¹⁶⁰ OB transcription, p. 42.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Money and its availability played a significant role in his time in England with further specialisation requiring extensive funding to study and sit exams. His fee as a “huisdokter” was not always sufficient and yet he managed to procure enough support so as to complete his MD (Medicinae Doctor or Doctor of Medicine) as well as his FRCS (Fellowship of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons), a licence that saw him qualifying to practice as a senior surgeon in the United Kingdom and Ireland.¹⁶³ The money to do so was provided by an old friend and agemate of Jacques’, Nicolas Charles Krohne, himself a scion of an old Worcester family.¹⁶⁴ Jacques visited him and spoke of his desire to write the FRSC that bore the hefty cost of £125 which was immediately given to him by his old friend.¹⁶⁵ The young doctor came to be highly respected in England by colleagues and mentors alike for his work ethic and talent and was noted for his ability to correct squints and fix detached retinas.¹⁶⁶ He continued to work in the city but soon found himself longing to return to the land of his birth, in which he eventually arrived in the early months of 1916.¹⁶⁷

Jacques began making his own impressions and forging his own path in the Cape medical, political and social scenes and in doing so, caught the attention of Henry Fagan who, when speaking of the young doctor to Steyn, was particularly impressed by Jacques’ retention of his Afrikaans accent despite having only spoken English for so many years.¹⁶⁸ At the same time, Willie Roux, an old family acquaintance from Worcester surfaced and gave him a blank cheque to be used to fund the establishment of his new practice in Cape Town, his living costs and any other expenses he might incur.¹⁶⁹ The intention behind such generosity was characteristic of the rising camaraderie and notions of ‘brotherhood’ that were evident within burgeoning Afrikaner nationalism. Roux’s reasoning was that of wanting to help to establish a larger group of Afrikaans medical specialists that could operate, literally and figuratively, at the same level as their English counterparts.¹⁷⁰ He wanted Jacques’ new practice to mirror that of his first in

¹⁶³ OB transcription, p. 42

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, and interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019. A scion is a descendent of a wealthy or aristocratic family.

¹⁶⁵ OB transcription, p. 43.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42. Emmie recalled one Crooks claiming that “your [Jacques’] fraction work is above the ordinary” and “your squints and the way you can do that [fix them]”.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* It appears that he had made Fagan’s acquaintance in Paris some years earlier with Fagan adding that Jacques had made a sizable name for himself and had given up a great deal to come back to South Africa to start again from scratch, already having come from a poorer background than many others.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43. Roux had heard of Krohne’s contributions towards Jacques’ finances and felt he needed to make his own.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

London and even went so far as to insist that Jacques hire a nurse to assist him and use some of the money to buy himself a car after finding out that he had been walking and using the tram to lower expenses.¹⁷¹ Jacques' modest beginnings served him well in the grounding and humility it bestowed on the talented young doctor, elements of him that no doubt drew Emmie to his character.

The news of their engagement came as a pleasant shock to many of their friends, many of whom wrote of their surprise but also of their excitement for Emmie having found a kind and gentle soul that she knew she could share her life with. Congratulatory letters poured in from their wide circle of friends many of whom remained in the couple's lives and included old school friends like Dora Poultney and more prominent figures like C.R. Swart and Lady Eileen De Villiers Graaff, wife of politician and magnate Sir David De Villiers Graaff.¹⁷² Jacques was immediately made to feel like one of their own and took to calling his future mother-in-law 'Mammie' from the outset.¹⁷³ This was not an uncommon trait in Tibbie's relationships with her children's partners and spouses, with most addressing her in the same way in their own correspondence with her. Jacques had lost his biological mother at a young age and still maintained a good relationship with his step-mother to whom he wrote regularly but appears to have had a strong and engaging relationship with Tibbie with whom he shared much of his life. The same can be said for his relationships with Emmie's siblings with Colin and Jacques often spending time with one another when the former was in the Cape during the parliamentary session.¹⁷⁴

Emmie and Jacques were truly kindred spirits. Both loved politics and the intrigue that the political game brought, both had a strong Christian faith and enjoyed being actively involved in Afrikaner organisations and groups that worked to further the Afrikaner cause. Upon his return to South Africa, Jacques had almost immediately joined the relatively new National Party, with Emmie being a keen follower and observer of the party's activities and efforts. It then comes as no surprise that the two fell in love as quickly as they did after having bonded over facets of their lives that were of the utmost importance to them. After their brief but clearly fruitful time together in the Free State, Jacques had to return to his life and practice in Cape

¹⁷¹ OB transcription, p. 43. He had repaid his debts to Roux within 18 months of being in practice.

¹⁷² KAB A969 Boxes 4 & 8, various letters between Jacques and Emmie, May 1918.

¹⁷³ KAB A969 Box 8, various letters from Jacques to Tibbie Steyn.

¹⁷⁴ One can pick up on their time together in the letters from Emmie to Tibbie Steyn that range over a number of years. These letters are predominantly held in the ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/8/1/1/1 – 2/8/1/1/20.

Town in June 1918. Throughout his journey home he checked in with Emmie and made sure to update her on his progress and remind her of just how fond he had grown of her. The 20th day of each month appears as ‘their’ day with both sending telegrams brimming with adoration. Their correspondence went beyond their monthly declarations to one another and letters were exchanged almost every second day.¹⁷⁵

In the July of 1918 Emmie visited her sister Tibbie and her family at the *pastorie* in Wepener where Jacques continued to send his notes and letters to his betrothed. Gifts were also regularly exchanged with Emmie sending him several pairs of homemade socks for the winter and Jacques having her favourite flowers delivered regularly.¹⁷⁶ Most of their letters followed a similar pattern, that of giving their accounts of daily life just as any couple would have done but the telegrams of the 20th are some of the most endearing:

“In sweet memory of the twentieth which recalls such happy moments and the opening of the road into perfect happiness. Love”¹⁷⁷

“Happy thoughts and sweet memories of the twentieth and your coming visit makes them happier still. Best of love”¹⁷⁸

The two also began planning their wedding and their future as a married couple with Jacques keeping a watchful eye on the Cape property market in the hopes of finding an affordable yet comfortable home for them to start their lives in but did not want to commit to buying a house before Emmie had a chance to have her say in the matter. He suggested that they rent a home in the initial stages until they found a home both could agree on and then purchase furniture only once prices dropped and restrictions ceased after the war. Visits to both the Free State and the Cape were planned with both being eager to be reunited at any possible opportunity with Jacques making the trip to Bloemfontein in the first week of October 1918 where he stayed at *Onze Rust* for three weeks. Not long after Jacques’ return home, Emmie was struck by what appears to be a case of the now infamous Spanish Flu and wrote to Jacques of symptoms that she could not seem to shake off. On top of her responsibilities to her mother and her own illness, Emmie was playing nurse around the house as Colin was having his own problems with

¹⁷⁵ KAB A969 Boxes 4 & 8, various letters and telegrams between Jacques and Emmie in 1918.

¹⁷⁶ KAB A969 Box 8, Jacques - Emmie, 17 August 1918 & 28 October 1918.

¹⁷⁷ KAB A969 Box 8, Jacques - Emmie, 20 July 1918. Almost all of the correspondence between the two that remains is that of Jacques’ letters to Emmie with several of her replies interspersed in their collection at the KAB.

¹⁷⁸ KAB A969 Box 8, Emmie - Jacques, 19 September 1918.

blood clots in one of his legs and his fiancé Rae Eksteen appearing to have had a case of the flu too.¹⁷⁹

The epidemic had made its way to Bloemfontein a few months beforehand and had claimed its first victim by the 6th of October.¹⁸⁰ Within two weeks the death toll had reached up to 135 deaths per day but then slowly decreased in the weeks that followed the 18th of October, largely due to the swift reaction by Bloemfontein's local government and healthcare professionals.¹⁸¹ Both Emmie and Jacques lost people close to them with his friends and family in Worcester being particularly affected. Emmie appeared to start feeling better in the first weeks of November but wrote of a serious lapse in her condition on the 17th of November with Jacques immediately writing of his anxiety to learn of her sudden deterioration.¹⁸² After the local doctor visited the farm on the 27th, it appears that she felt that she was not making progress in overcoming the disease.¹⁸³ Tibbie also wrote to him of Emmie's condition and her concern regarding the fact that it had affected her more so than in the weeks before.¹⁸⁴

In his response, a copious amount of medical advice was passed on, all in an effort to hear of his bride feeling like herself once again.¹⁸⁵ By the 1st of December, and for the first time in many months, Emmie was feeling healthy again and began preparing for her trip down to the Cape a week later.¹⁸⁶ The two were reunited and spent more than two months together, likely preparing for Emmie's move to her new city and their fast approaching wedding day. Much of the correspondence that follows speaks of their excitement for the end of April and the exchanging of plans to help prepare for the day. Jacques sent an extensive list of guests and their addresses to whom invitations would be sent while Emmie wrote of her own planning in Bloemfontein and of the dresses for herself and her mother that were being made in Cape Town.¹⁸⁷

¹⁷⁹ KAB A969 Boxes 4 & 8, various letters and telegrams

¹⁸⁰ H. Phillips: *In a Time of Plague*, p. 102.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104. In total the epidemic claimed 1300 lives in Bloemfontein from a population of 30 767.

¹⁸² KAB A969 Box 8, Jacques - Emmie, 18 November 1918.

¹⁸³ KAB A969 Boxes 4 & 8, Jacques - Emmie, 26 & 28 November 1918 and telegram Emmie to Jacques, 26 November 1918.

¹⁸⁴ KAB A969 Box 8, Tibbie Steyn - Jacques, 24 November 1918.

¹⁸⁵ KAB A969 Box 8, Jacques - Tibbie Steyn, 26 November 1918.

¹⁸⁶ KAB A969 Box 8, Jacques - Emmie, 1 December 1918.

¹⁸⁷ KAB A969 Box 8, various letters, February, March and April 1919.

With their wedding day looming, Jacques wrote of his excitement to see Emmie and spend as much time as possible with her in the two weeks prior to their nuptials. On the 17th of April Jacques set off for the Free State, arriving the following day armed with well wishes and gifts from many of his friends in the Cape.¹⁸⁸ After a swift decision to marry, a long-distance relationship with extensive correspondence and close to a year of planning, their special day had finally arrived. On the morning of the 30th of April 1919, the “Tweetoring” church in Bloemfontein welcomed hundreds of guests to the union of the young, tenacious daughter of two Afrikaner icons and the reserved but brilliant doctor from the Cape. The ceremony and following reception had been organised by various members of the church and larger community and was led by Gordon Fraser.¹⁸⁹ The church was said to be overflowing with guests, many of whom had to be seated in the highest available seats in the gallery.¹⁹⁰ Preceded by a group of six young flower girls made up of their nieces and other family friends, the elegant figure of Emmie emerged at the top of the aisle on the arm of her brother Colin who stood in the place of their father. He led his youngest sister to the altar where Jacques eagerly awaited. The ceremony was performed by her brother-in-law, Ds. N.J. van der Merwe who finally proclaimed the two to be husband and wife. To the tune of a newly composed song by Prof. P.K. De Villiers, the newlyweds proceeded back up the aisle to walk through a confetti walkway provided by the girls of Oranje.¹⁹¹

Guests then moved on to the Ramblers Hall a short distance away from the church where they were expected at 11:50 and welcomed to the venue by the live band ‘Vaudette’ playing Mendelssohn’s wedding march. The room had been beautifully decorated with the tables being arranged in a T-shaped formation and others flanking the room as a space for gifts and to display the exquisite wedding cake. With the arrival of all of the invited guests, the bride and groom made their appearance and took their place at the head table where they received the many congratulations from the attendees. Adv. Percy Fischer, a close family friend of the Steyn’s gave the main toast of the evening, recalling his fond memories of the family and Emmie herself as well as his first encounter with Jacques. The groom was next to speak, using the opportunity to speak of his deep love for his new bride, professing that she had given him permission to speak of their contentment with their marriage, despite it only having been

¹⁸⁸ KAB A969 Box 8, Jacques - Emmie, 16 November 1919.

¹⁸⁹ *Die Volksblad*, May 1919, “Huwelik Emmie Steyn – Dr du Toit”.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

official for all of forty five and a half minutes.¹⁹² His speech was followed by the newly elected convenor of the Free State Dutch Reformed Church synod, Ds. Bam who wished the couple well on behalf of all of the church elders.¹⁹³ Finally, Colin Steyn gave thanks for the many kind words bestowed on the newlyweds after which the party continued. Not long afterwards, Emmie and Jacques left their reception by car and drove back to *Onze Rust* where they made their final preparations before alighting the afternoon train in Kaalspruit to begin their honeymoon in Durban.¹⁹⁴

The two arrived at the Hotel Edward on the 2nd of May and spent several weeks on the Natal coast, taking time to travel to various beaches and sightseeing attractions.¹⁹⁵ Emmie wrote extensively to her mother during their time away, with Jacques doing much of the same. Their days were filled with a combination of rest and relaxation alongside several shopping excursions, all while taking the time to be present in each other's company. They also made the acquaintance of several other couples and individuals with whom they had lunches and dinners. One thing that weighed heavily on Emmie's mind was the reality of her upcoming move to the Cape and the need to confront the idea that should would no longer be within arm's reach of her family and the home they shared:



Figure 4: Emmie & Jacques on their wedding day

*“Ek wens Kaapstad was net vyf uur van Onzerust in plaas van 36 uur [I wish Cape Town was only five hours away from Onze Rust instead of 36 hours]*¹⁹⁶ Before she knew it, their

¹⁹² *Die Volksblad*, May 1919, “Huwelik Emmie Steyn – Dr du Toit”.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ KAB A969 Box 10, Emmie - Tibbie Steyn, 2 May 1919.

¹⁹⁶ KAB A969 Box 10, Emmie - Tibbie Steyn, 13 May 1919.

honeymoon had come to an end and the two made the journey to their new home via Kaalspruit, to begin their lives as Dr. and Mrs. J.S. du Toit of Cape Town.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ KAB A969 Box 10, Emmie - Tibbie Steyn, 13 May 1919. In the first letter to her mother from their honeymoon, Emmie can barely contain her excitement about finally being married and now being referred to and signing her name as Mrs Dr. J.S. du Toit.

Chapter Two – The mother of all hosts, 1920-1930

*“Ek het in die Afrikaners geglo...[I believed in the Afrikaners]”*¹⁹⁸

The move to a new province after her marriage prompted Emmie to adapt to a new group of locals and their ways, fast making friends and becoming a hostess to rival all others. The decade saw the birth of all four of her children, the beginnings of her active political involvement and an extended European tour that saw her separated from her children for nearly six months. It also saw the development of her relationship with Gen. Hertzog and his wife Mynie to the point where she was considered ‘the first daughter’ of Groote Schuur.¹⁹⁹ Finally, the period brought her into the city at a time of burgeoning thought around the rights of women and the roles they should be allowed to play in society with Emmie believing she could play a political part just as well as any man could.

Cape Town in the 1920s was a world away from the quiet familiarity of the Free State and its sprawling plains that feel as though they go on forever. The relative hustle and bustle of an already remarkably expanded Bloemfontein paled in comparison to the coastal city that was in the early stages of its industrial development. In the wake of the First World War, Cape Town began to expand its infrastructure and move towards a more industrialised economy and while it was not to quite the same extent as the rapidly swelling Johannesburg, the differences between the still relatively rural Free State and the cosmopolitan city that awaited Emmie were self-evident.²⁰⁰ The growth of the city brought with it an influx of opportunities and a host of new immigrants from all over the country and the rest of the world that in turn, was met with the beginnings of more formalised racial segregation. The Cape liberal tradition was still a factor in the attitudes of politicians and citizens alike and would have stood in stark contrast to

¹⁹⁸ Quoted in *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 October 1969, “Emmie du Toit glo aan ‘n ‘teetafel’”, p. 78.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019.

²⁰⁰ H. Lawson, “The Economic basis of Afrikaner Nationalism”, *Liberation*, (27) (1957), pp. 18-23. See also V. Bickford-Smith, *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis: Cities and Identities in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) and V. Bickford-Smith et al, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: An Illustrated Social History* (New Africa Books, 1999).

the views and positions of the hardened northerners of the Free State and Transvaal.²⁰¹ The post-war attitudes of South Africans began to shift towards a hardened racism that saw growing divisions between racial groups with a continued white domination of industry and politics that went beyond the thinly veiled liberalism that was being fronted by predominantly English speaking politicians.²⁰²

The Cape had an added layer of complexity in the form of the dynamics between English and Afrikaans speakers that permeated most levels of society. Afrikaans was often still perceived as ‘backwards’ and outdated in the eyes of English speakers, particularly in the city itself. A formalised language movement emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in an effort to have Afrikaans recognised as an official language in South Africa as opposed to simply being seen as a Dutch dialect. In 1875 the ‘*Genootskap vir Regte Afrikaanders*’ [Society for Real Afrikaners] was founded and began publishing original and translated works in Afrikaans and included important texts like the Bible, dictionaries and South African histories.²⁰³ Through sustained campaigns and efforts, Afrikaans was recognised as an official language in 1925 but was still viewed as being under the broader banner of Dutch which retained its status as the predominant alternative to English. It must be noted that this fight for recognition was driven and funded by white Afrikaans speaking men who viewed themselves as ‘*ware*’ [true] Afrikaners and often held prominent positions or were able to contribute given their comparative wealth.²⁰⁴ It was not necessarily driven by the everyday man and would most definitely not have been attributed to non-white Afrikaans speakers.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ The Cape liberal tradition has already been covered extensively in a host of publications and therefore will not be heavily examined in this work. Put simply, the tradition is that of the allowance of a qualified vote to coloured men in the Cape based on land ownership and income. In this context coloured refers to the racial group defined as being of Malay heritage and is not extended to include South Africans classified as black. Such ideas regarding enfranchisement of black South Africans would not have been tolerated in the north where a controlled mass black labour force was needed to maintain the labour-intensive industries like mining that drove industrial development. Population wise, coloured men did not constitute a significant portion of the provinces beyond the Cape and the concept would likely have never been considered for implementation.

²⁰² See V. Bickford-Smith, *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis: Cities and Identities in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

²⁰³ ‘South African histories’ at this stage would have been primarily Afrikaner-centric history with a strong focus on events such as the Great Trek, the Frontier Wars and the more ‘recent’ Anglo-Boer War.

²⁰⁴ The most notable of these was the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* spearheaded by the writer Dr S.J. du Toit amongst others and would later form the basis of the Afrikaner Bond. See R. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond*, (Oxford University Press, 1966).

²⁰⁵ See A Ehlers, “The Helpmekaar: Rescuing the “*volk*” through reading, writing and arithmetic, c.1916–c.1965”, *Historia*, (60), (2), November 2015, pp. 87-108 for specific reference to the origins of the *Helpmekaar* organisation that formed part of a larger network of Afrikaner organisations and businesses.

Furthermore, it is important to understand the dynamics of what it was to be defined as an Afrikaner in this period. Though the ‘definition’ can be fluid and is dependent on opinions or views of one’s self, the term in this context refers to white Afrikaans speaking South Africans who identified with the characteristics of the concept along ethnic lines whereby creating the aforementioned concept of the *volk*. There are also class considerations in this realm with the formalised organisation of the masses emerging in this period of the 1920s and 30s wherein for the sake of legitimacy, every effort was made to draw people from far and wide, high and low to bolster the perceived strength of Afrikaners. The establishment of Afrikaner-centric organisations like the National Party and *Nasionale Pers* [National Press] in 1914 and 1915 respectively, ushered in the era of forming Afrikaner alternatives and competitors to English social, political and economic groups. Given the period, these new associations were constructed along gendered lines with primary membership being limited to men with women’s wings or divisions being run alongside and made subject to the larger organisation. Women had formed their own independent organisations such as the ACVV in the fields of social work and welfare but were limited in their involvement in formalised political groups instead vaguely aligning their aforementioned organisations with the men.²⁰⁶

The social hierarchy in Cape Town was well established by the 1920s and would have been used to control admission into social circles. Wealth and friends in high places brought better opportunities for socialising and networking that worked to strengthen business ties and form political alliances with these interactions taking place in the homes of the elite, in social and dinner clubs and in the halls of politics and business, with wives finding their own ‘power’ bases as the women behind prominent men.²⁰⁷ For these women, dinner and lunch parties were spaces to demonstrate one’s abilities as a hostess with the attendance of politicians, businessmen and cultural icons alike helping to secure positions on the proverbial social ladder. Emmie’s move to the Cape meant integrating into a new culture and social order but it must be

²⁰⁶ Afrikaner women formalised their political involvement in 1923 with the establishment of the Nationalist women’s parties. This will be elaborated and expanded upon at a later stage. For more on these networks and the bonds between groups see A Ehlers, “The Helpmekaar: Rescuing the “*volk*” through reading, writing and arithmetic, c.1916–c.1965”, *Historia*, (60), (2), November 2015, pp. 87-108 as well as M. du Toit, “The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 1 (March 2003), pp. 155-176.

²⁰⁷ Though it falls outside of the periodization of this work, one of the most prominent of these clubs was the ‘*Klub Here Sewentien*’, an Afrikaner equivalent to the predominantly English Cape Town City Club. Founded in 1955, Emmie was a founding member and eventual honorary president, presiding mainly over the women’s club that met for weekly tea parties and monthly evening gatherings. See ‘*Klub Here Sewentien*’ collection in the Stellenbosch Special Collections.

understood as not having been a tremendous stretch from the realities of her former life in the Free State. In the context of the late 19th and early 20th century, the Steyn family had grown in prominence and notoriety in Afrikaner and English circles alike. The efforts of her father in the aftermath of the war regarding the reconciliation of the warring parties as well his reputation as an exemplary and upstanding statesman, granted the bearers of his name a sense of status, this without even considering the role that their mother Tibbie played and the acclaim that her work may have brought in its own right. Despite her parent's relatively humble beginnings as the children of farmers and preachers respectively, as a Steyn, Emmie was regarded as Afrikaner royalty and therefore as a member of the "Boer aristocracy" that was prevalent in the old Free State and Bloemfontein social and political scenes.²⁰⁸

In the latter years of her time in the Free State and as a young woman from a prominent family, Emmie had honed her abilities as a hostess and had come into her own as a sort of figure and representative of an idealised image of what it was to be a young Afrikaner woman. This 'training' stood her in good stead for her move to the Cape where socialising was a core element in the establishment and growth of networks made up of those with real wealth and power. She also brought with her longstanding relationships with highly respected and well to do politicians, many of whom were old family friends and had seen her grow up into an even more confident and outspoken young woman. These factors converged and may have gained her automatic acceptance into many of the circles one would hope to crack when moving to a new city. The site of 16 Oliver Road in Sea Point became the new site of many a gathering, with the drawing room of Emmie and Jacques' new home not standing empty for terribly long stretches of time. As was the fashion, their property was in need of a name that would easily identify it and distinguish it from others. Given her roots, Emmie put forward several Sotho suggestions to pay homage to the Free State but was otherwise convinced by her husband to settle on "*Vreugde*" [Joy] so as to make their identities as Afrikaners clear from the outset.²⁰⁹

It was into this home that they welcomed their first daughter on the 4th of February 1920 whom they named Tibbie Iona. Less than a year later, Emmie was expecting once again and the family grew by another daughter, Nerina Hélène on the 4th of September 1921 and on the 29th of October 1924, Emmie and Jacques welcomed their third daughter, baptising her as Ileana

²⁰⁸ *Die Huisgenoot*, 28 March 1958, "Op Maroela boer 'n presidentsdogter".

²⁰⁹ *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 October 1969, "Emmie du Toit glo aan 'n 'teetafel'", p. 78.

Emeline in February of the following year. Unlike her mother, Emmie appears to not have struggled with her recovery to the same extent in the weeks and months following the births of her children. Despite the numerous health issues that had plagued her in her youth and young adult life, her more robust figure may have stood her in better stead to bear the strain and stress of childbirth. With three young children and a husband whose successful practice occupied a sizable portion of his time, Emmie was kept on her toes. Help in the home was never far away and much of the burden of the household duties was borne by the three black servants that Tibbie had arranged to move to the Cape with Emmie and Jacques to “make her life easier” subsequent to their wedding.²¹⁰ Further to this, her mother made regular trips to the Cape to see the ever expanding family with the purposes for her visits being multi-faceted and planned to coincide with various highpoints in the Steyn family calendar. Tibbie would spend anything from several weeks to a few months with the family and would attend events like the opening of Parliament, to which she was always invited as well as taking the opportunity to celebrate her birthday on the 5th of March, a date she shared with her son-in-law, Jacques.²¹¹



Figure 5: Emmie and Ileana



Figure 6: Klein Jacques, the du Toit's only son

²¹⁰ *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 October 1969, “Emmie du Toit glo aan ‘n ‘teetafel’”, p. 77.

²¹¹ E. Truter: “Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 207.

The Cape became a sort of refuge for Tibbie and *Vreugde* served as the base from which she could meet old friends, attend social and political gatherings and spend time with her beloved grandchildren. Emmie had been her mother's closest companion in the years following Steyn's death in 1916 and the two retained their remarkable bond even though they were no longer close in geographical terms, making their time together in the Cape all the more special. On several occasions, the younger Tibbie, her husband Nico and their children made the trip from Bloemfontein and came to stay with the Du Toit's while Parliament was in session.²¹² Further to this, Colin and his wife Rae, then the headmistress of Oranje and the 'fifth' Steyn daughter in many ways, were also often in the Cape given Colin's numerous ministerial and judicial appointments initially as a member of the National Party and later, the United Party.²¹³ *Vreugde* became akin to a second home for the Steyn children and their own families with Emmie as their doting sibling and host.

A strong focus on Emmie's reputation and abilities as a hostess may come across as overemphasising a very specific aspect of her life and may even be seen as perpetuating stereotypes and social norms of the period as opposed to focusing on elements that outright challenge and defy these conventions. Quite simply, Emmie was a woman of her time and the product of an upper middle-class upbringing that consisted of governesses, regular visits from high ranking and statesmen politicians which warranted a display of one's abilities as a host. Her aptitude as such was known by many but the true jewel in her proverbial crown was her tenacity and sense of purpose in the political realm and the ability to marry the two truly define who and what Emmie was. She hosted numerous dinner parties in the weeks preceding and during the opening of parliament, claiming to prefer to limit those at her table to sixteen (to maintain but not overwhelm with engaging conversation) while not forgetting to invite only the most auspicious guests.²¹⁴

A healthy mix of people was essential for a successful party and those in attendance may have come from a great many different places that included foreign dignitaries on diplomatic

²¹² ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/6 – various letters from Nico van der Merwe to Tibbie Steyn from the Cape.

²¹³ Emmie often spoke of hosting her brother and sister-in-law in her home during the session in her letters to her mother. See ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/8/1/1/1 – 2/8/1/1/10. For information on Colin's ministerial positions see B.M. Schoeman: *Parlementêre verkiesings in Suid-Afrika 1910–1976*. Pretoria: Aktuele Publikasies, 1977.

²¹⁴ *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 October 1969, "Emmie du Toit glo aan 'n 'teetafel'", p. 77. Guests included the Hertzog's, the Jansen's and other parliamentarians with their partners.

assignments in South Africa as well as English speaking Cape ‘locals’, many of whom had been sympathetic to the Republican cause during the war and naturally acquainted themselves with the daughter of an icon.²¹⁵ Her Free State inspired meals like curried frikkadels, mock turtle soup (an old favourite of her father’s), and replacing rice with samp received mixed reactions but opinions were soon tempered by the flow of sherry, wine and brandy at all stages of the evening.²¹⁶ Emmie was forthright in ensuring that there was minimal separation between the men and women so that they as women could have just as much say in their politics as what their husbands could.²¹⁷ Having come from a family that encouraged the expression of ones views and feelings regardless of their gender orientation was evident in these situations, though some of her close circle did often wish she would be more conscious of her audience and timing.

As is to be expected, this strong drive and interest in politics is not out of place for the daughter of a former president but the sheer zeal that Emmie possessed was not necessarily to be expected of a young woman in early 20th century South Africa. In the early stages of her life, Tibbie had attempted to curb Emmie from speaking out of turn, particularly regarding politics and asked her daughter to “take mothers’ advice and only talk on topics agreeable to both parties”.²¹⁸ While Emmie had been in hospital for a knee operation in the Cape as a teenager, Tibbie and her mother, Isabella Fraser, were concerned that without their supervision, the youngest Steyn may say something to offend the others in her ward “with a little strong language” brought on by developments in the cabinet that involved their close friends, the Graaffs.²¹⁹ Tibbie sent an annotated copy of *The Friend* to Emmie, pointing out the offending issue in the margins. As Truter notes, this is not the usual correspondence between a fifteen-year-old and her mother but does provide a prime example of the engrained political streak that drove Emmie from a young age.²²⁰

²¹⁵ The term icon is bold but has been used deliberately in this context so as to emphasise just how Steyn was seen in the eyes of Afrikaners and other sympathisers alike.

²¹⁶ *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 October 1969, “Emmie du Toit glo aan ‘n ‘teetafel’”, p. 77. Steyn’s penchant for turtle soup is noted in Meintjies’ biography. The menus for the evenings at *Vreugde* are also available in KAB A969 Box 21.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ E. Truter: “Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, p. 90. Truter wrote the foremost biography on Tibbie Steyn for her postgraduate studies and was given unprecedented access to material by Emmie’s daughter Nerina.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 89. Original sources are found in Free State Archive repository.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

‘Outspoken’ is the word that both precedes and follows the descriptions of Emmie’s political views and the way that she expressed them. Her mother’s advice of watching the language one used when speaking and reading a room so as not to offend may have fallen on deaf ears. Though never being one to purposefully embarrass herself or others, the overarching tensions between English and Afrikaans speakers and the political affiliations that came with these distinctions often drew Emmie into conflict with those who may have seen her fervent nationalism and passion for her people in a different light. Rather than have them be seen as her own views she held in her personal capacity, her approach was immediately seen to threaten the reputation of both her husband and his practice. On a trip to Alphen in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, it was suggested by their hosts, the Cloetes, that she “tone down her militant Afrikaans for the sake of her husbands’ practice”.²²¹ When a gossip column caught wind of the apprehension of her friends, Emmie banned the offending paper from the waiting room of his practice, naturally replacing it with *Die Burger*.²²² After months of what she deemed as harassment, she put a stop to it all with a statement: “*My man het sy praktyk gehad voor ek Kaap toe gekom het. Buitendien, jy is of ‘n goeie oogarts of ‘n slegte ene...* [My husband had his practice before I came to the Cape. Besides, you’re either a good eye doctor or a bad one.]”²²³ Emmie was not going to be held to a different standard and made subject to her husband’s career, nor was she willing to accept the notion that her views would have any more effect on Jacques’ practice than what his capabilities as a surgeon did.

In the midst of raising her first child and falling pregnant with her second, an opportunity for Afrikaner women to formally enter the political realm arose with the establishment of nationalist women’s parties in the four provinces of the Union. The first of these was the founding of the *Vroue Nasionale Party* [Women’s National Party] or VNP in the wake of the 1914 rebellion.²²⁴ The women of the Free State and Natal followed suit and were joined by the establishment of the *Nasionale Vroueparty* [National Women’s Party] or NVP in 1923 with Mrs F.W. Reitz as honorary president of this Cape-based constituent.²²⁵ The women aligned themselves with the principles of their male counterparts, those of Christian values that would

²²¹ *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 October 1969, “Emmie du Toit glo aan ‘n ‘teetafel’”, p. 77.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ L. Vincent, “The Power Behind the Scenes: The Afrikaner Nationalist Women’s Parties, 1915 to 1931”, *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1 (May 1999), pp. 55-56. Each party was organised as a standalone entity in the respective region and not as a regional branch of a single party. They were individually structured and operated independently from one another. See additional information on p. 51 of this article.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

further the efforts of those that had come before and also ensure the success of those still to follow.²²⁷ With their Christian morals guiding their processes, the women focused some of their attention on the societal issues that were believed to have plagued their constituents (excessive drinking and gambling were but some of the examples given), factors that had the potential to threaten the might of the *volk*. Attention was also placed on children's education, the promotion of Afrikaner literature and nationalist newspapers like *Die Burger* as well as hosting bazaars and other social events to raise funds for the National Party.²²⁸ These activities were still second to their primary aim which was to have an overtly political space for Afrikaner nationalist women that did not necessarily infringe on the work of welfare organisations like the ACVV. Women were hungry to be included in the political process and took the new opportunity to do so with both hands.²²⁹

More than ten years before the establishment of these parties, a twelve-year-old Emmie was clear on where she stood with regards to suffrage and a woman's place in politics and it is unlikely that she would have changed her views in the time that had since passed. Dr Aletta Jacobs, the pioneering Dutch physician and prominent advocate for women's rights and suffrage, visited *Onze Rust* on her tour of South Africa in 1910/1911 and Emmie took the opportunity to speak her young mind when she had the chance. In a strongly worded letter to Dr Jacobs, Emmie outlined her view that women were entitled to their vote just as the men were.²³⁰ Her closing words could not have been more apt, nor could they have spoken more to who Emmie already was: "Since the world was created man had ruled and it was time the women had a turn".²³¹ True to form, Emmie joined the organisation as a founding member and was in attendance at the inaugural congress of the NVP held on Wednesday the 12th of December 1923 at the City Hall in Cape Town.²³³

²²⁷ L. Vincent, "The Power Behind the Scenes: The Afrikaner Nationalist Women's Parties, 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1 (May 1999), p. 56.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ This is reflected in their official minutes and mouthpiece that spoke of their elation at having an independent platform to pursue their ideals. See ARCA Cape National Party collection A1/2/2/1-A1/2/2/2.

²³⁰ E. Truter: "Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 90.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³³ ARCA Cape National Party Collection, PV27, A1/2/2/1, Verslag van die Eerste Kongres, Nasionale Vroueparty (Kaapprovinsie), Stadsaal, Kaapstad, 12 December 1923.

On the evening of the first day of the congress, Emmie was elected to the “*Voorligtingskomitee*” [Counselling Committee], a sort of higher council in the management and organisation of the party. There appears to have been a substantial power bestowed on these women as, “*’n belangrike besluit van Donderdag middag hang saam met die voorafgaande* [an important decision on Thursday afternoon sits with the aforementioned].²³⁴ Her fellow committee members were MER (with whom she represented Cape Town) and Miss M. le Roux, Mrs Dr Gie and Dr Lydia Van Niekerk, all of whom represented Stellenbosch.²³⁵ Prior to their election, Dr van Niekerk, who was the first female professor appointed at Stellenbosch University, gave an address in which she called on women to take their own place in politics:

“Die idee dat die huis gesin niks te doen het met staatsaangeleenthede nie, is verkeerd; die waarheid is dat die huisgesin die middel punt is van die staat, en of ’n vrou dit nou wil of nie, allerhande landsake en landtoestande het sy terugslag op die huisgesin, en ter wille van die welvaart van haar huisgesin moet sy kennis dra van sake buite die huis [The idea that the family home has nothing to do with government business is wrong; the truth is that the family home is at the centre of the state and whether or not a woman likes it, all country wide issues and conditions have an effect on the family home, and for the sake of the prosperity of the home she must be aware of the matters outside of it].²³⁶

By explicitly linking the two, the personal became political and women were encouraged to involve themselves for the sake of their families. Van Niekerk went on to draw attention to the roles of women in New Zealand who after being the first to be granted suffrage in 1919, used their new positions as full citizens to push for their right to information regarding health and childcare services. The intention was to suggest how these efforts could be applied in a South Africa with disproportionately high child mortality rates.²³⁷ She also focused on the widespread impoverishment of the *volk* (and the work already being done by the ACVV to combat it), the

²³⁴ E. Truter: “Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955”, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 6.

²³⁵ ARCA Cape National Party Collection, PV27, A1/2/2/1, Verslag van die Eerste Kongres, Nasionale Vroueparty (Kaapprovinsie), Stadsaal, Kaapstad, 12 Desember 1923. M.E. Rothman was the leader of the ACVV and a prominent author who has become closely associated with the active duties of women in South African welfare history. See Marijke du Toit’s work on the ACVV for context. Mrs Gie was the wife of historian Prof SFN Gie, a member of the SU history department. (SFN Gie: *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, deel I, Pro Ecclesia Drukkery, Stellenbosch, 1924).

²³⁶ ARCA Cape National Party collection, PV27, A1/2/2/1, Verslag van die Eerste Kongres, Nasionale Vroueparty (Kaapprovinsie), Stadsaal, Kaapstad, 12 Desember 1923, p. 4.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

“*naturellebevolking*” [native population] and pacifism all of which she saw potential for women to play an important role in, albeit only in having their say.²³⁸

Van Niekerk, and perhaps many of the women in attendance, were cautious around the question of the vote for women and she made her sentiments very clear:

“Wat weet ons omtrent die ontstaan en betekenis van stemreg in die algemeen en van vrouestemreg in die besonder? Watter pligte en regte het iedere mens teenoor sy eie land en watter verantwoordlikheid sal die stemreg op ons lê? Is dit 'n ongewenste las en mag ons nog langer ons oë sluit vir ons verantwoordlikheid vir sake wat die vrouelewe aangaan? [What do we know of the origin and significance of voting rights in general and women's voting rights in particular? What duties and rights does each person have towards their own country and what accountability will the right to vote have on us? Is it an undesirable burden and may we even shut our eyes to our responsibility for women's affairs?]²³⁹

Their caution may not have been entirely misplaced, and prior to the founding of the women's parties, they were wary of the intentions behind a push for enfranchisement, especially if it was being driven by men. Hertzog had supported the idea of granting women their suffrage, if only to create a larger electorate for his party but would not fully commit to doing so without first having addressed the issue of African and coloured enfranchisement.²⁴⁰ Women's enfranchisement bills had been proposed to parliament on four separate occasions, each time losing the vote and being struck from the roll due in part to near universal opposition from the Nationalists both in parliament and in the general public.²⁴¹ Malan, a man living in a household of independent, strong-willed women and surrounded with female friends of a similar nature, voted against one of these bills in the February of 1923 but came to see the matter differently after being worn down by his stepmother Esther, herself a highly respected member of the nationalist women's movement and later chairperson of the NVP.²⁴² The women of the Steyn family, themselves married with their own families and daughters, appear to have been firmly

²³⁸ ARCA Cape National Party collection, PV27, A1/2/2/1, Verslag van die Eerste Kongres, Nasionale Vroueparty (Kaapprovinsie), Stadsaal, Kaapstad, 12 Desember 1923, p. 5.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 188. Koorts notes that this was a departure from his prior stance in which he was more vocal about the notion but maintained relative caution as to whether it would benefit the larger community, negatively impact on family structure or worse so in his mind, open the door to “universal suffrage which would enable blacks and coloureds – and ultimately their wives and daughters – to gain the vote in the three Northern provinces” (p. 189).

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 189-191.

behind the call for suffrage and the right of a woman to have her say in the politics of her country, when as early as 1921, a petition was handed over to parliament that contained close to 55 000 signatures calling for the enfranchisement of women, with Emmie and Rae (Colin's wife) being reported as both signatories and attendees at the issuing of the document to the government.²⁴³

The men are not necessarily solely to blame for the slow uptake in the fight for women's suffrage with the attitudes of some women still being firmly set on maintaining traditional gender roles and actively abstained from involving themselves in matters they deemed too far outside of the realm of the household, while others saw suffrage as something they did not wish to have bestowed upon them.²⁴⁴ Further to this, women's suffrage debates and movements also had a distinctive English connotation that both Afrikaner women and men were acutely aware of and made them err on the side of caution so as not to seem too closely affiliated. There appears to be a definite class distinction within the move towards the campaign for the vote, with the feeling being that of women from outer lying and more rural areas seeing the concept as an 'urban' phenomenon that was a result of living in the amoral and less traditional cityscape. In the work on this period, it is the wives and young women of the middle to upper middle class that are leading the fight and are making their voices heard. The women had also self-imposed the idea of the *volksmoeder* on themselves and were employing the sentiments attached to it to draw larger audiences and support from their constituents.²⁴⁵ As the gatekeepers to the home and the family, the women were seen as having the power to influence young minds and guide their children towards being the epitome of what it was to be a good Afrikaner. The explicit connotations they denoted to the role of the woman in Afrikanerdom meant that their entrance into politics would be conditional to these notions and that their enfranchisement would mean that they continued to play that role unconditionally.

²⁴³ L.M. Kruger: "Gender, community and identity: women and Afrikaner nationalism in the *volksmoeder* discourse of *Die Boerevrou* (1919-1931), Unpublished MSocSci thesis, University of Cape Town, 1991, p. 179. The original report was published in *The Woman's Outlook* magazine.

²⁴⁴ For a far more concise explanation of the feelings of some of these women, see L.M. Kruger: "Gender, community and identity: women and Afrikaner nationalism in the *volksmoeder* discourse of *Die Boerevrou* (1919-1931), Unpublished MSocSci thesis, University of Cape Town, 1991, pp. 166-179.

²⁴⁵ The intricacies of Afrikaner women's fight for suffrage is properly examined in Louise Vincent's "'A Cake of Soap': the *volksmoeder* ideology and the Afrikaner women's campaign for the vote", Seminar paper, 23 March 1998, wherein the theoretical and pragmatic elements of the movement are unpacked. Much of the work on their English counterparts is covered by Cheryl Walker in her piece titled "The Women's Suffrage Campaign" in her book *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, New Africa Books: 1990.

Within a matter of months, the men of the National Party had a sudden ‘change of heart’ and began calling on women to join the women’s parties in their masses. Though they were not espousing the actual enfranchisement of women just yet, they were instead implying that the move towards it was being made but warranted better organisation on the part of the women’s parties themselves and the solving of the black electoral debate. Hertzog and the Nationalists feared that if enfranchisement was granted and there was a decided lack of organisation amongst Afrikaner women, English speaking women would have the opportunity to enter the political fold and pose a serious threat to their efforts by supporting Smuts’ SAP.²⁴⁶ MER made note of the men’s promises for the vote in her own report of the congress published in *Die Burger* in the days following the meeting and would have been one of the first to hold them accountable if they reneged on their word.²⁴⁷ Their male counterparts were primarily suggesting that the debates pertaining to ‘women’s issues’ should be opened to those whom the issues would actually have a direct impact upon.²⁴⁸ In light of the delay in the realisation of the enfranchisement process, the women threw their weight behind campaigning and recruitment in the name of the party with the fruits of their labour bearing a surge in membership in the wake of the 1924 election.²⁴⁹ Smuts and the SAP were defeated in the election by what came to be known as the Pact government consisting of Hertzog’s National Party and Col. F.H.P. Creswell’s Labour Party who immediately set out formalising labour and agricultural policies.²⁵⁰

The women continued their work in their independent organisations that saw them taking strides towards making a tangible impact on their communities. Later in 1924, a motion was passed in parliament that saw the explicit banning of social outreach/welfare work for political parties which had the potential to threaten the very foundations on which the women’s parties stood. Though they had never intended to fulfil the role that the ACVV had already established, their work sought to augment these efforts while they simultaneously campaigned for their suffrage. Instead, they were now relegated to continue their efforts by focusing their attention of fundraising and campaigning for the larger National Party, but they would not soon forget

²⁴⁶ L. Vincent, “A Cake of Soap”: the Volksmoeder Ideology and the Afrikaner Women’s Campaign for the Vote”, March 1998, nr. 433, presented at the University of the Witwatersrand, p. 7.

²⁴⁷ M.E.R., *My Beskeie Deel: ‘n outobiografiese vertelling*, pp. 227-228.

²⁴⁸ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 191.

²⁴⁹ L. Vincent, “The Power Behind the Scenes: The Afrikaner Nationalist Women’s Parties, 1915 to 1931”, *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1 (May 1999), p. 57.

²⁵⁰ See E. Rosenthal: *Encyclopedia of Southern Africa*, Cape Town and Johannesburg: Juta and Company Ltd., 1978.

the promises that Hertzog had made. In a personal capacity, Emmie does not appear to have been on any of the numerous committees that were set up at the annual congresses beyond that of the “*Voorligtingskommittee*” in 1923. Her reality had become that of being a mother to three young girls and the wife of an in-demand husband, domestic politics that may have temporarily gotten in the way of national politics.

Towards the end of 1925, Emmie and Jacques began preparing for an extended trip to Europe on their own. They hosted a number of guests in December of that year that included a New Year’s Eve party at their home but spent much of their time planning and making arrangements for the upcoming tour that included deciding with whom their three young girls would stay.²⁵¹ Their forthcoming absence from the Cape was also known to their close circle of friends with both Hertzog and Malan writing to Emmie in the weeks before their departure. Hertzog, writing from Pretoria, hoped to see them in the little time he was due to spend in the Cape before returning to the Free State for the festive season so as to hear of their itinerary and to wish them well on their travels.²⁵² Malan was rather more jovial in his letter to Emmie on the 24th of December 1925 and quipped: “*Hoe gaan die land gedurende jou Europese reis sonder jou klaarkom?*” [How will the country manage during your European travels?]²⁵³ Though he was poking fun at Emmie, his sentiments were not completely misplaced.

With the opening of Parliament in the January of 1926, Nico, the younger Tibbie’s husband, came to stay at *Vreugde* where the Du Toit’s joined him on outings to numerous events. On the 25th of January, schools resumed after a lengthy break and Emmie was invited to attend and give an address at the opening of a new Afrikaans medium school in town alongside other noted Afrikaners from the surrounding areas.²⁵⁴ Nico accompanied his sister-in-law and his two nieces, Iona and Nerina, noting that the event dragged on for far longer than what was expected with the girls quickly growing bored with the long-winded speeches that culminated in Nerina complaining that there had not been nearly enough singing from the church affiliated

²⁵¹ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/6, Emmie – Tibbie van der Merwe, n.d December 1925.

²⁵² ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/6, Hertzog – Tibbie Steyn, 1 December 1925 & KAB A969, Hertzog – Emmie, 1 December 1925.

²⁵³ KAB A969, Malan – Emmie, 24 December 1925. In the few surviving pieces of correspondence between the two, Malan addresses Emmie as ‘*Noointjie*’ or ‘*Niggie*’, an affectionate term that can also be used for girl friend or a young woman.

²⁵⁴ This was the opening of Jan van Riebeeck Hoërskool in Cape Town. This was a major occasion and milestone for Afrikaners in Cape Town given that it was the first single medium school that catered for Afrikaners in Cape Town. For more see <https://janvanriebeeck.co.za/geskiedenis/>.

members of the audience.²⁵⁵ Emmie had not been feeling particularly well in the days preceding the event but had managed to curb her symptoms enough to be able to attend and do her part in the opening of the school.²⁵⁶

In the last week of February 1926, Emmie and Jacques left Cape Town on the T.S.S. Ulysses for what was to be a six-month tour of the United Kingdom and western Europe. Their three young ones, including a barely four-month-old Ileana, were left in the capable hands of her sister Hannah and at a later stage, Tibbie, both of whom travelled down to the Cape and took up residence at *Vreugde* so as to not disrupt the girls more than what was necessary.²⁵⁷ A large number of their companions on board were Australians who had already been on the ship for several weeks before it arrived in the Cape.²⁵⁸ Emmie noted their “otherworldly” and “chic” nature in both their dress sense and drinking preferences and was taken aback by the sheer volumes of alcohol that the women in particular were able to ingest.²⁵⁹ Their “cocktails” and whiskey soda consumption seemed to pale in comparison only to that of cigarettes which were smoked en masse in the public spaces on board.²⁶⁰ The conservative and somewhat pious reality of Emmie’s upbringing and life stood in stark contrast to that of their companions who wore dresses “at least two thumbs shorter” than some of her own pieces that she thought to be edging on the less modest end of the spectrum.²⁶¹ A further shock to the system was the Sunday church service that entailed more singing than preaching and did not impress the devout Calvinist who had hoped for a more formalised order of business.²⁶²

Emmie’s dive into uncharted moral territory was short lived and the couple arrived in Las Palmas in the Spanish Canary Islands just shy of two weeks from their departure from their family in the Cape. In her first letter to her mother from the trip, Emmie explains that she and Jacques are going to treat the trip as “a second honeymoon” and plan to do equal parts sightseeing and work, the latter referring to their upcoming time in the United Kingdom where Jacques would be performing operations and working with old colleagues and mentors from

²⁵⁵ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/7, Nico – Tibbie, 26 January 1926.

²⁵⁶ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/7, Nico – Tibbie, 25 January 1926.

²⁵⁷ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Rae Steyn, 28 February 1926; ‘Mackie’ – Tibbie Steyn, 2 March 1926. All of the following direct quotes are translated from the original Afrikaans text found in the letters.

²⁵⁸ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Rae Steyn, 28 February 1926.

²⁵⁹ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 7 March 1926.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*

his time as a student and young doctor.²⁶³ The couple toured the island by car where they explored museums and cathedrals and spent time browsing the markets that wended their way down the streets in the main part of town.²⁶⁴ Haggling with Spanish salesmen had almost got the best of Jacques when after purchasing a set of particularly large carved ivory elephants that Emmie had pined over, he was harassed and nearly guilted into buying yet another set of them from a neighbouring stall. With hands quite literally full of elephants, Jacques had to loudly declare that he did not need any more elephants in his life than what he already had, all while Emmie stood by laughing and taking great pleasure in seeing her husband in his flustered state.²⁶⁵ The elephant debacle brought their brief stopover on the island to a close and by the end of the week, they had returned to the ship to continue the journey on to the United Kingdom.

For the next 10 days following their arrival in Southampton, Emmie and Jacques travelled by train to London and took time to stop along the way to see old friends and acquaintances as well as take in the sights and sounds of the city when they did eventually arrive. The Du Toit's were collected from Euston station by John 'Oom Jan' Roberts and 'klein Lalie', the daughter of friends Koos and Lalie Smit who happened to be out of town at the time.²⁶⁶ An important figure with whom they would spend a considerable amount of time over the coming months was Oom Jan, a Welsh businessman and a great friend of the numerous Afrikaners he had shown unconditional support for in the wake of the war. Oom Jan was a beloved figure in the upper echelons of Cape Afrikaner society and had formed a particularly strong relationship with the Steyn's.²⁶⁷ Through him, Emmie came to know other pro-Afrikaner English men and women with whom she maintained extensive correspondence and had stay in her home should they ever find themselves in the Cape. Much of the Du Toit's time was consumed with numerous visits to the gardens, museums and galleries of the city and its surrounds, all interspersed with lunches and dinners with their ever-expanding social circle. They also made

²⁶³ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 7 March 1926.

²⁶⁴ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 18 March 1926.

²⁶⁵ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 7 March 1926.

²⁶⁶ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 18 March 1926. Lalie was a cousin of Tibbie's and was married to the then High Commissioner to London.

²⁶⁷ Oom Jan visited South Africa once a year for up to three months, staying with Emmie and Jacques in their home and using it as base during his time in the country. He maintained correspondence with almost all members of the family with him and Emmie being in regular contact right up until his death in 1960. Their correspondence can be found in boxes 6, 9 and 12 in the KAB A969 collection. Additional insight into their relationship from interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019.

an effort to visit the Middle Temple where Colin and Gladys had read their law degrees, followed by a trip to the infamous Fleet Street, the home of the printing press and publishing.²⁶⁸ Taking the opportunity to purchase trinkets, clothes and homeware that were otherwise unavailable in South Africa, appears to have been a priority for Emmie. Though one can only speculate her notoriously frugal husband's view on the matter, many of the items purchased were done so with an intention for them to actually be used by the family, or so Emmie told her mother.²⁶⁹ In the heart of London, Selfridges department store was the first of its kind and a marvel to behold on Oxford Street and was impressive enough to be granted three pages worth of description and detail by Emmie in her recounting of their visit to the store to her mother.²⁷⁰ The overwhelming abundance of products coupled with the sheer volume of people wending their way through the sections and navigating the numerous floors was almost impossible to comprehend though Emmie did her best to paint an accurate image of what she had experienced.²⁷¹

Overwhelming shopping expeditions aside, their plans for the rest of the trip were not set in stone and were subject to change at any given moment. The original plan was to head north to Edinburgh to visit the city where Jacques had lived and studied as a young man. However, they had not taken the university holidays into account which meant that many of the professors Jacques had hoped to meet and work with were not available.²⁷² The trip had intended to combine both work and leisure and Jacques had arranged to perform operations and do consulting work during their stay so as to further his experience, learn new techniques from his peers and build on the extensive knowledge that he already possessed and was known for. Plans to do this in Edinburgh were put on hold momentarily and it was decided that they would visit Paris instead, returning to London in late May or early June.²⁷³ While Jacques was busy with his aforementioned work, Emmie was more than happy to keep herself amused.

Whilst she sat and read one of her favourite novels during a solo outing to Hyde Park, she happened to run into Mrs Bessie Marais, the widow of philanthropist and politician Jannie

²⁶⁸ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 18 March 1926.

²⁶⁹ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4 numerous letters from the trip detailing the purchases made and sent on to South Africa ahead of their return.

²⁷⁰ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 18 March 1926.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 22 March 1926.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

Marais, who was walking through the park with her brother.²⁷⁴ The two had a lengthy conversation that went on into lunch and further still into mid-afternoon tea. Not having felt as though they had said quite enough to one another, an invitation was extended to dinner which they naturally accepted and attended later that evening.²⁷⁵ This would not be the last that the Du Toit's would see of Mrs Marais and less than a week later, the group had gathered around the dinner table once again, albeit in an entirely different country the second time around.

Paris in late March was on the brink of spring but had not yet managed to shake off the remnants of winter with Emmie writing of the cold wind that persisted in the first few days of their stay.²⁷⁶ The weather eventually looked set to improve with the first of many tours around the city starting in the first week of April. Not much of Paris was left unseen by the Du Toit's as they criss-crossed the cobbled streets touring the parks and gardens, exploring galleries and museums and taking in all of the magnificent sights the city had to offer. Shopping was once again high on the agenda, but Emmie's spending habits were curbed by her awareness of the high prices that she seemed not to have expected.²⁷⁷ Her many years of studying French came to her aid as she was able to haggle for the best deals as well as help to mediate in the multiple miscommunications between her husband and several shop assistants who had been confused by Jacques' broken French.²⁷⁸ They made time to meet with old friends, one of whom was a university lecturer living in the city and offered to give them a personal tour of the lesser known areas that would have been missed without the insight of a local.²⁷⁹ Naturally, the Eiffel Tower was high on the priority list but the journey to the top was delayed by the onset of rain. Jacques was less than impressed by the idea of walking up to the top, but Emmie urged him on even when he threatened to return to the ground midway up to the second floor. The effort appears to have been worth it with both being impressed by the views that awaited their ascension.²⁸⁰

Culture and the arts had always been important to Emmie and their time in Paris afforded multiple opportunities to engage with and appreciate what France had to offer in this respect. She and Jacques attended the Opera on one of their first evenings and were led on a guided,

²⁷⁴ Jannie Marais was a mining magnate and philanthropist who co-founded the *Nasionale Pers* and bequeathed money for what would become Stellenbosch University. See P.H. Kapp, *Nalatenskappe sonder einde: die verhaal van Jannie Marais en die Marais-broers*, (Tip Africa Publishers, 2015).

²⁷⁵ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 22 March 1926.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 22 March 1926 & 28 March 1926.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 28 March 1926.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

full day excursion to Versailles where they were able to explore the extensive palace and its surrounding gardens.²⁸¹ Another outing was a tour of the Louvre along with Bessie Marais and Mathilde Beyers, all three of whom were astounded by the variety and quality of the collections.²⁸² The extensive touring and sightseeing also brought with it memories of her own childhood and the time that the Steyn's had spent in France in the period following the war. It often left Emmie nostalgic and longing for both her parents and her own children whom she was missing terribly.²⁸³ Her sadness was short lived and she took comfort in knowing that her daughters were doing well and were being kept occupied by their grandmother and her numerous visitors like the Hertzog's, to whom she also wrote while on their travels. Emmie wrote to the old General of their amazement of the 'Americanisation' of Europe and how American culture had permeated numerous facets of Parisian life, "*Als jy op die stasie kom die eerste wat jy sien is 'New York Herald', 'American Hotel DeLuxe', 'American Hospital' en al die hotels is vol van hulle* [When you arrive at the station the first thing you see is 'New York Herald', 'American Hotel DeLuxe', 'America Hospital' and all of the hotels are full of them (Americans)].²⁸⁴

After their whirlwind trip to the historic city, Emmie and Jacques made their way to Venice for yet another week of touring museums, galleries and markets. Their already extensive glass and silverware collection grew by several unique pieces of hand-blown Venetian glass that Emmie knew she would not be able to obtain elsewhere.²⁸⁵ The culture overload was mediated by other, more leisurely excursions like gondola rides and long lunches overlooking the busy streets and canals. Being confronted by the political developments in Europe was unavoidable and Italy provided one such development that would serve as a sort of forbearer to the path that Emmie would later follow. While lamenting the numerous travellers' taxes that they were

²⁸¹ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 28 March 1926.

²⁸² *Ibid.* Mathilde was the widow of General C.F Beyers, a general in the war and leader in the Boer rebellion of 1914/15. He drowned in 1914 while crossing the Vaal river in an attempt to escape capture by government troops. Beyers and Steyn knew each other from the war years and also maintained contact during the Rebellion (Suid-Afrikaanse Biografiese Woordeboek vol III, pp.67, 69). Jannie and Bessie Marais were probably the closest one could get to a Cape version of Afrikaner royalty in the Steyn tradition. The difference being that the Steyn's reputation was primarily built on "political" capital whereas the basis of Marais capital was "financial". Both families employed their "capital" in the furthering of the nationalist Afrikaner cause. Bessie would be the kind of "Afrikaner elite" that Emmie would welcome at her tea table. See P.H. Kapp, *Nalatenskappe sonder einde: die verhaal van Jannie Marais en die Marais-broers*.

²⁸³ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 28 March 1926.

²⁸⁴ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 22 March 1926; Emmie – Hertzog, 7 March 1926.

²⁸⁵ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 22 March 1926; Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 10 April 1926.

having to pay on top of their hotel and food bills, Emmie wrote to Hertzog of the passion and faith that she saw the Italians held for their relatively recently acquired leader, Benito Mussolini. To her, it seemed that in spite of his substantial use of taxation to boost state income in the post-war era, he had sustained support and that “*hul aanbid hom nou absoluut*” [they now adore him absolutely].²⁸⁶

They would not stay in Venice for long and were soon on yet another train, this time wending their way through the foothills of the Alps to Vienna. At this stage, Jacques was looking to do some work during their stay in the city but was struggling to come by new patients and doctors with whom he could work. Whilst he did the work that he could find, Emmie kept herself busy by reading novels and the various newspapers that she could find. At several stages along their trip, she had been able to get copies of *The Argus*, *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* sent to their hotel so as not to fall too far behind on the happenings back home while also perusing the British papers for their take too.²⁸⁷ A short illness appears to have followed shortly after their arrival with Emmie complaining of painful joints and a sore throat.²⁸⁸ Jacques was tasked with getting her back to full health despite not being terribly well himself and they managed a short car ride around the city before the driving rain made their outing unbearable.²⁸⁹

Though she always had her daughters in the back of her mind, the few short weeks that Emmie had to sit with her thoughts made her long for her children and home even more than before:

*“Ek sou gister iets gegee het om die eerste skip huis toe te neem – ek het vir alles in Vreugde verlang...ek kan glad nie eers besluit vir welke dogterkie ek die meeste verlang nie – ek wou hulle somer al drie gehad toe net vir ‘n cuddle en ‘n soenkie [Yesterday I would have given anything to take the first ship home – I missed everything at Vreugde. I couldn’t even decide which daughter I missed the most – I just wanted all three of them even if only just for a cuddle and a kiss].”*²⁹⁰

It would still be another three months before she could embrace her girls again and there was still much travelling to be done. After Jacques had done enough work as he could procure, they took the train to Lucerne in Switzerland, stopping in Salzburg and Reichenhall along the

²⁸⁶ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Hertzog, 7 March 1926.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/6, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 10 April 1926.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Note the distinctive Dutch elements that are still dotted in her language.

way.²⁹¹ Though these stopovers were brief, Emmie made an effort to find the home that their party had stayed in during her father's treatment at the health spa in Reichenhall.²⁹² Other stops along the way were made for Emmie to show Jacques the towns that the family had lived in and to give him an idea of what she had experienced as a young girl. It was also an opportunity for Emmie to see these towns, reflect on her experiences and recall fond memories from a new, more adult perspective.²⁹³

Switzerland offered many of the same experiences as what Paris, Italy and Vienna did with the added benefit of Jacques having several colleagues with whom he would work and consult patients. They made several trips to the opera and to the small villages that surrounded Lucerne with Emmie once again spending much of her time corresponding, reading and keeping up with what few snippets of local politics she could receive. Before returning to London, the Du Toit's spent time in the Netherlands where they as members of a party of 12 South Africans living in the Netherlands, received a group of Dutch illustration students for a formal dinner.²⁹⁴ In the Hague they were set to visit an old friend but were unable to do so whereby using the opportunity to have a look around the idyllic town before they returned to prepare for their departure for Brussels. After nearly having bought a particularly expensive lace table cloth whose price may have shocked even her mild-mannered husband, Emmie and Jacques boarded a ship at Ostend on the Belgian coast and set off for their final stint in the United Kingdom.²⁹⁵

Upon their return to the city of London, Emmie and Jacques found themselves in the midst of the general strike of 1926 that would go on for the first two weeks of May. Though it is unlikely that they would have been majorly inconvenienced by the activities of the strikers, Emmie was taken aback by the sheer number of those involved and the tactics that they employed to make their points heard.²⁹⁶ Oom Jan had been visiting them frequently and had spent a great deal of time with Emmie while Jacques was working, with the two of them discussing politics and poring over the South African newspapers she had managed to procure. A week later they had made the move up to Edinburgh where Jacques had been longing to go for much of the trip.

²⁹¹ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/6, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 20 April 1926.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/6, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 4 May 1926.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/7, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 12 May 1926. Emmie would never be one to condone the tactic of resorting to violence that was undertaken by social and political movements, an opinion that she would later imbue in her own political activities.

The month that followed was predominantly aimed at Jacques doing as much work as possible, networking with colleagues and learning new procedures and techniques that he could incorporate in his own practice in Cape Town. He also wanted Emmie to see the city that he loved so dearly through her own eyes.²⁹⁷

The last few weeks of the trip were spent rounding up loose ends and seeing as much of the country as what they could. They travelled by car back to London but diverted from the normal route to travel through the West Country to Salisbury where Jacques had practiced as a newly qualified doctor, then onto Southampton, Brighton and finally back up into London itself.²⁹⁸ Koos and Lalie Smit also joined them on parts of this final leg and served as valuable companions with whom they were always shown the greatest kindness and made to feel entirely ‘at-home’.²⁹⁹ In preparing for their arrival back in the Cape, Emmie expressed concerns about how she and Jacques would be received by the youngest of their brood:

“Ek weet nie of Mammie plan het om Ileana behoort te bring nie, maar ek dink sy moet maar liewers by Vreugde bly - want reeds sal sy ons nie meer ken nie en dan met die gedrang van mense sal sy miskien so skrik dat dit my tweemaal so lank sal neem om vriende te maak. Ek het Mammie met ‘n baby laat staan en Mammie moet net sien dat ek ‘n baby terug kry en nie ‘n groot mensie wat kan praat nie...[I don’t know if you planned to bring Ileana along with you but I think she should rather stay at Vreugde – because otherwise she will not know who we are and with the throng of people she might be so frightened that it will take me twice as long to make friends with her. I left you with a baby and you must just make sure that I get a baby back and not a big girl who can speak].³⁰⁰

After nearly six months of being away from their home and their family, Emmie and Jacques left for South Africa on the 30th of July 1926 aboard the Windsor Castle, eager to hold their daughters once again and resume their busy lives. On the 10th of December 1926 and nearly five months after their homecoming, Emmie and Jacques welcomed their fourth and final child, a son whom they named Jacques Steyn Du Toit. Emmie’s pregnancy may have been the cause of some of her health troubles in the early stages of the trip though she does not explicitly state that she was expecting their son. The Du Toit’s had also arrived back in South Africa in the midst of an ongoing debate that would have a significant impact on the trajectory of Afrikaner

²⁹⁷ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/7, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 12 May 1926.

²⁹⁸ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/6, Emmie – Tibbie Steyn, 23 June 1926.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

nationalism and its key role players, that of the flag debate. Seen as one of the most divisive and seemingly never-ending periods in the lives of nationalist politicians with their close friend Malan bearing the brunt of driving the process and being adversely affected by the stress and strain it brought.³⁰¹

The crisis had once again erupted in the May of 1926 but had been stewing in the preceding months and entailed the question of the usage of the Union Jack as a symbol of the nation.³⁰² It occupied much of the conversation at social events as it threatened to divide and conquer all those involved. Emmie had tried to remain on top of the happenings during their travels but struggled to do so given the almost non-existent coverage of South African news in British newspapers like the *Daily Mail* and *London Times*.³⁰³ Malan and his cohort proposed a ‘clean’ flag, one that did not contain the Union Jack or the old Republican flags of the Transvaal and Free State, unsurprising given that Malan did not feel a particular loyalty to the latter as a native of the Cape.³⁰⁴ Emmie stood fervently behind Malan on the matter but may have been more inclined to the inclusion of the flag that represented her people and their pride as Free Staters:

“A common flag of our very own to imbue us all with the patriotic sentiments will do much to unite us and as unity is the only salvation for this glorious country of ours, the day that South Africa’s own flag is hoisted should be one of universal rejoicing”.³⁰⁵

By saying as much, Emmie openly objected the use of the Union Jack as a symbol of South African unity to the point of landing herself in hot water with some of her nearest and dearest.

Social events like garden parties were commonplace for Cape socialites, government officials and dignitaries and provided a space to mingle with an annual garden party hosted by the Governor General being one of the most anticipated on the social calendar.³⁰⁶ In the heat of the

³⁰¹ KAB A969 Box 13, Malan - Emmie, 5 July 1926.

³⁰² L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 223. There had not been a new, all-encompassing flag introduced following union in 1910. Instead, the Union Jack was used with variations of blue and red ensigns being flown on government buildings alongside it.

³⁰³ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/4, Emmie – Hertzog, 7 March 1926. The most she could glean in terms of news from home was that Smuts had undergone surgery and was recovering well. Her tone in this letter to Hertzog speaks for itself and she is bitterly disappointed to have not yet been able to learn of the developments in the move towards the Colour Bar and Electoral Bills as well as the delivery of the annual Senate report.

³⁰⁴ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp. 223-226.

³⁰⁵ *The Cape Argus*, 16 May 1925, “Mrs J.S. du Toit: A Political Hostess”, n.p.

³⁰⁶ As the representative of the monarch in the country, Lord Athlone (the 4th Governor General) would have adhered to the tradition of flying the Union Jack at his residence.

debate and well aware of the potential fall out, Emmie turned down her invitation to the party in a show of solidarity with Malan's position. In her own mind, she simply could not attend a party that would openly fly the flag that represented the empire that her own family had been prisoners of and fought against less than a quarter of a century before.³⁰⁷ Her open rejection of the prestigious and highly sought after invitation was noted by Athlone's administration who sent a letter of apology to her for any offence they may have caused while simultaneously approaching Hertzog to tell of her defiance.³⁰⁸ For having dissented so openly, Emmie was now under the watchful eye of her old friend, the Prime Minister. This would not be the last time that their relationship was strained and not terribly long after the affair, he came to forgive but would not soon forget.

The relationships between Emmie and the Hertzog family were long established, having been cemented during the war. Hertzog was a close advisor to Steyn and was a regular visitor to *Onze Rust* and continued to visit Tibbie and her children long after Steyn's death in 1916. Having grown up with the family, Emmie was more than comfortable with regards to holding her own amongst them and did just that after moving to the Cape. When Hertzog and his wife Mynie would relocate to the city during the parliamentary session, Emmie would often host them for lunches and dinners all the while growing closer to Mrs Hertzog, for whom she would essentially act as a sort of private secretary.³⁰⁹ In the ever-changing and cutthroat world of politics (notwithstanding the dynamics of the people behind the politicians), being seen as a close companion or friend of some of the most powerful people in the cabinet could only stand Emmie in good stead in Afrikaner social circles. Emmie was well aware of this and made full use of any opportunity to demonstrate just how much she knew it would make people talk. With Hertzog installed as Prime Minister in 1924 as leader of the Pact government, parliamentary sessions served as the perfect stage on which she could wield this 'power'. In a description written by none other than her mother, Emmie's acute awareness of who she was is made abundantly clear:

"Emmie always enters as if the House belongs to her, takes her seat reserved for the members' wives and if that happens to be full, she is off to the Prime Ministers' bay."³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 October 1969, "Emmie du Toit glo aan 'n 'teetafel'", p. 78.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ E. Truter: "Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955", DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 209.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Her mother goes on to point out that any other person in the parliamentary chamber who was not an actual member of that government would not dare to emulate one such manoeuvre with the threat of being removed from the building in its entirety. In this case however, no one dared ask the daughter of a former President and a close friend of the Prime Minister to remove herself from her seat, likely out of fear of receiving a tongue lashing of their own from an altogether self-assured and vociferous woman. A plain show of entitlement is how it was perceived by many, with some calling her “a privileged being”.³¹¹ Words like this fell like water off a duck’s back and Emmie was not in the least bit fazed by the opinions and perceptions of others, especially if it had anything to do with her politics.

Though she had always remained close with Hertzog, their significant difference in age meant that the two were more likely to butt heads or come into conflict with one another, more so than what he would with her mother. Emmie’s inhibitions when it came to voicing her political views and opinions would not have always sat as well with an ‘old hand’ like Hertzog nor did they do Tibbie any favours when she was attending events during her annual stay that meant having to socialise with the upper echelons of Cape, English-speaking society. Even with her deep-seated drive for the Afrikaner cause, Emmie could not avoid interacting with her English counterparts and was not impartial to attending these same events where she would socialise or in some cases, host them as her own guests. A noteworthy example of this is the visit of King Edward VII, in the early months of 1925. The Nationalist hardliners were less than enthused with his tour but in a bid to show support for Hertzog, Tibbie coincided her own trip to the Cape with that of the Prince and was promptly invited to an informal lunch with His Royal Highness on the lawns of Groote Schuur.³¹² Tibbie was not alone in her invitation and was joined by Emmie, Jacques and Klasie Havenga, then the Minister of Finance and a friend of the Du Toit’s. In what must have been a relief for all those involved, Emmie was on her best behaviour and her top form with her notorious sense of humour being well received by the Prince. Tibbie wrote of the triumph, describing Emmie as having “brought life and fun into the afternoon and [making] it a success”.³¹³

³¹¹ E. Truter: “Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 209.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 211.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

A true passion and genuine concern for politics is what brought Emmie together with some of her closest confidants with these relationships often being built on a mutual dedication to the *volk* and their role in the betterment and development of their people. Malan served as one such friend, a relationship based on the fact that they could not only engage on a social level but could also wade into the difficult waters of the South African political scene. Emmie stood fervently behind her friend and his leadership, and earnestly believed that he would be the one to follow through on his promises to his people.³¹⁴ Prior to the fifth sitting of the congress for the NVP in December 1927, Emmie had been elected as the leader of the Cape Town branch of the organisation and served as their representative in the caucus. At a meeting of the branch on the 3rd of November, a motion was passed to write to Malan and re-emphasise the faith that these women had for the leader of the Cape National Party and their Minister of the Interior, Public Health and Education and it fell to Emmie as their leader to pass on the sentiments:

“Op ‘n vergadering van die Nasionale Vroue Party (Tak Kaapstad), gehou op 3de November 1927 was daar ‘n sterk behoefte gevoel om te verseker van ons vertroue in u beleid, en ons dankbaarheid dat ons in u ‘n beginselvaste leier het [At a meeting of the National Women’s Party (Cape Town Branch), held on the 3rd of November 1927 there was a strong need felt to express our confidence in your policy, and our gratefulness that we have a principled leader in you.]”³¹⁵

The faith that these women placed in Malan was not solely due to his firm stances on his policies or his bulldog like stubbornness in having them put through. Two of the three important ministerial posts that he held had a direct impact on the lives of women and their families as well as the work that organisations like the ACVV and the NVP engaged in. The successes and failures of his policies could influence the everyday person and their ability to thrive in whichever setting they found themselves in. Issues pertaining to his third post as Minister of the Interior were brought up at the 1927 women’s congress, where amongst suggestions for the restriction of Eastern European immigration and the registration of eligible voters were put forward, the Cape Town branch led by Emmie issued a firmer statement than most.³¹⁶ Since the congress of 1924 had decided to hold off on pursuing suffrage until the

³¹⁴ These sentiments are obvious throughout the OB transcript even when discussing the more tumultuous periods of their relationship.

³¹⁵ Stellenbosch University Special Collections DF Malan collection, 1/1/781, Emmie – Malan, 10 November 1927. The policy she refers to is most likely to do with the flag crisis. That same month was of immense difficulty to both Malan and the women of the NVP as his step-mother Esther Malan passed on as a result of her ever-deteriorating health (L. Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 236).

³¹⁶ ARCA Cape National Party collection PV27, A1/2/2/1, Verslag van die Vyfde Kongres, Nasionale Vroueparty (Kaapprovinsie, Stadssaal, Malmesbury) 7-9 December 1927, p. 6.

‘native issue’ had been dealt with, they suggested that more, if not all, attention be given to resolving this ‘more pressing’ issue so that the women of the party could finally be granted their right to vote and no longer be made to feel inferior or humiliated by their inability to have their say in issues like the flag crisis.³¹⁷

Emmie and Malan’s relationship went beyond politics and the semantics around issues like enfranchisement and in her own words, she had a soft spot for the notoriously curt politician and dominee.³¹⁹ Beyond having first met in Europe when Emmie was far too young to be aware of the streams of people who visited them, their friendship only truly developed after one of her father’s trips to the Cape with Emmie as a travelling companion and the two having stayed in Malan’s home while he was instilled as the editor of *Die Burger*.³²⁰ They had also, on occasion, rented the house while he moved into his Tamboerskloof home, aptly named *Helpmekaar* in honour of his work on behalf of the financial organisation that both Jacques and Emmie later became involved in.³²¹ With the Du Toit’s just over the hill in Sea Point, the two grew close and would often rely on one another in times of need. One such occasion was the death of Mattie, Malan’s first wife and mother of his two small children, who lost her battle with rheumatic fever and a blood infection in December 1930.³²² Emmie had gone to their home on the night of her passing to be with her old friend and help where she could, particularly regarding taking care of his boys, Danie and Hannes, which he found to be a most daunting prospect.³²³

Malan’s fears were eased by the arrival of his step-mothers sister, Nettie Fourie, with whom he had corresponded for many years and who now came to his rescue and stepped into the role of a mother figure for the little ones.³²⁴ Nettie was not only familiar to the Malan’s but also to Emmie who had known her from her time at Oranje where Nettie had worked as a matron during the early years of Emmie’s time at the school.³²⁵ Given that she had her own children

³¹⁷ ARCA Cape National Party collection PV27, A1/2/2/1, Verslag van die Vyfde Kongres, Nasionale Vroueparty (Kaapprovinsie, Stadssaal, Malmesbury) 7-9 December 1927, p. 6.

³¹⁹ OB transcript, p. 22.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

³²¹ OB transcript, p. 21 and L. Korf: DF Malan: a political biography, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 2010, p. 194.

³²² L. Korf: DF Malan: a political biography, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 2010, p. 290.

³²³ L. Korf: DF Malan: a political biography, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 2010, p. 291. and OB transcript, p. 20.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

³²⁵ OB transcript, p. 21.

to raise at the same time, Emmie took great relief in knowing that Nettie would be a loving and stable figure for Malan's boys and steadfast homemaker who would manage the domestic aspects of Malan's life that he was less than apt at dealing with.³²⁶ Emmie remained close with the family and found herself aligning herself more and more with Malan and his visions for South Africa in the midst of growing unease among some Afrikaners around Hertzog and his commitment to them. The true test of loyalty only arrived several years later but would not come to be a particularly difficult decision to make.

Family politics and dynamics were not terribly different from that which was conducted in the chambers of parliament. As with any family, there was no guarantee that the views one held would be the same as those held by the people with whom a childhood was shared. The Steyn children were no different and in the early years of the move towards a more formalised Afrikaner nationalist agenda, they found themselves standing on varying sides of the proverbial spectrum with some holding far more fervent views than others, the latter of course referring to Emmie. All were already notably involved in the political game in some way, shape or form, be it through marriage or their own personal affiliations. The younger Tibbie was married to Nico who was already a prominent party man who had a great deal of influence and power in the Free State National Party caucus, Hannah had been married to Everard who served in the Volksraad before his untimely passing in 1924 and Colin had served as the Deputy Minister of Justice, a National Party seat, under Tielman Roos from 1915 to 1928.³²⁷ Jacques had been a long standing member of the party too, and had been an original shareholder in the *Afrikander Koffiehuis* on Adderley Street in town, a meeting place for nationalists that was used for public gatherings and social events.³²⁸ In spite of the trials and tribulations that came with the growth of the party and its affiliated organisations, the family had managed to err on the side of peace with no major revelations threatening to divide them. The general election of 1933 would however serve as one of the first tests of loyalty to not only each other but also to their *volk*.

In the years preceding the election, the women's parties had proceeded with their support of the men's party agendas while continuing their own work and advocating for their suffrage. At

³²⁶ OB transcript, p. 22.

³²⁷ Gladys would only formalise her involvement in politics with the United Party in the late 1930s where she joined Colin in standing for public office.

³²⁸ Many of the signatories to the original shareholding papers were also financially invested in the *Nasionale Pers*. See Limited Companies record collection at the KAB, LC312: 1431 for *De Nasionale Pers* and LC318:1519 for the *Afrikander Koffiehuis*. Jacques was a shareholder in both as were Willie Hofmeyr and Henry Fagan.

the 1928 congress the women called for more widespread implementation of Afrikaans as the language of instruction and service in public offices like municipalities as well as the calling for recognition for the notion that the next Governor-General of the Cape be selected on the condition that he was born in South Africa and not in the United Kingdom as had been the norm.³²⁹ The issue of enfranchisement was brought up again and was more often than not initiated by an urban branch like Cape Town or Stellenbosch. At this particular congress, the Cape Town branch called for the mass support of constituents for the proposed enfranchisement bill put forward by Hertzog that could move their efforts forward.³³⁰ The bill was not put through and the women would have to wait a while longer before they were granted their rights, never allowing the issue to fall by the wayside and continuing their ‘campaign’ in the halls of their congresses and the pages of their official mouthpiece, *Die Burgeres*.³³¹

In that same year, the Steyn family were dealing with personal crises of their own. After a combination of extensive work stress, a near-fatal tonsillectomy and alcohol abuse, Colin suffered a nervous breakdown that would plague him and his family for nearly three years.³³² After several medical and familial interventions, including time abroad in Europe that warranted personal investments by his siblings and friends (one of whom was Roos), Colin moved between his sisters homes, arriving to stay with Emmie in September 1930.³³³ It would not be a long stay and it was soon decided that it would be best for everyone if Colin was moved to Pretoria and formally institutionalised, a step taken not without substantial deliberation and a great amount of dismay and pain at the thought of committing their brother.³³⁴ Gladys took much of the responsibility for Colin in this period with the reality of the rest of her sisters having their own families from whom they could not be apart from for extended periods of time.³³⁵ Their lives had resumed to a vague state of normality by the March of 1931 as Afrikaners moved into a period of political turmoil that reached its climax during the general elections of 1933.

³²⁹ ARCA Cape National Party Collection PV27, A1/2/2/1, “*Verslag van die Sesde Kongres, Nasionale Vroueparty*” (Kaapprovinsie, Stadssaal, Middelburg) 5-7 December 1928, pp. 10-23.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³³¹ *Die Burgeres* can be translated as “The Female Citizen” and was published from 1927 to 1934. The word ‘campaign’ is quoted as such so as to distinguish it from the women’s suffrage movement led by English-speaking South African women.

³³² E. Truter: “Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955”, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 214.

³³³ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

³³⁴ E. Truter: “Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955”, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 214.

³³⁵ Gladys was unmarried at this stage and was still practicing as an advocate in Bloemfontein.

In the meantime, the decades long efforts of both women and men were realised when women were granted the vote in 1930. Speaking in historiographical terms, much of the success of the granting of suffrage is attested to the predominantly English-speaking organisation, the Women's Enfranchisement Association of the Union or WEAC.³³⁶ In reality, Afrikaner women had played their own roles, albeit within their own communities and on their own terms.³³⁷ Hertzog had reaffirmed his promise to the women and relied on their faith in him to see his re-election in 1929. His appeals were successful, and the National Party won the election with Hertzog being instated as Prime Minister once more. After what must have felt like an age to South African women, they were granted the vote on the 19th of May 1930. The success was boasted about in the pages of *Die Burgeres* as the women saw this as an opportunity to fully participate in the enactment of their goals for the *volk*.³³⁹ The men however, had other ideas and were calling for the amalgamation of the women's parties with that of the men. The women of the NVP were less than impressed by the thought of it. For instance, the Loxton branch expressed their dismay at the notion and made their feelings clear, "*Ons tak het vir samewerking met die mans en nie samesmelting gestem* [Our branch has voted for cooperation and not for merging]."³⁴⁰

At the 8th NVP congress, held in Somerset East from the 1st to the 3rd of October 1930, Emmie was elected to the *Reëlingskommittee* [organising committee] alongside Ida Theron, the younger sister of Erica Theron, the Stellenbosch professor of social work with whom Emmie would later work in close quarters at the *Ossewabrandwag*.³⁴¹ The congress was held in conjunction with the men's organisation and Malan addressed the women of the NVP on the morning of the first day of proceedings. His address was well received as he advocated for the cooperation of the two groups so as to further the nationalist cause as much as possible. After his address, the *Reëlingskommittee*, suspended the sitting so as to have the caucus join in at the opening of the men's congress, where it was put forward that the two parties merge under one constitution and banner, that of the National Party.³⁴² A new constitutional committee was elected during these proceedings where after the committee heard a motion suggesting that should the two parties merge, the executive body of the party should consist of men and women in equal

³³⁶ See Vincent and Walker respectively.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ ARCA Cape National Party collection PV27, A11/1/1, *Die Burgeres*, August 1930

³⁴⁰ Stellenbosch University Special Collections, E PAM 17 BUR, Taknuus, *Die Burgeres*, August 1931.

³⁴¹ ARCA Cape National Party collection PV27, A11/1/1, *Die Burgeres*, December 1930.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

standing.³⁴³ The support for the motion was not outright and a fellow delegate suggested that the statement be amended before it was allowed to be voted on, a statement seconded by Emmie.³⁴⁴ Any objections to the suggested amalgamation would not long be debated as in that same week, it was decided that the merging would go ahead.³⁴⁵

In spite of their clear rejection of “the greater centralisation of control over the programmes of Afrikaner nationalism and the occupation of the central organs of control by men” the women eventually lost their political independence at the expense of being granted their vote.³⁴⁶ The notion of the *volksmoeder* had been used to mobilise them en masse as drivers of the nationalist agenda during the rise of the women’s parties but was now being used against them as a means to relegate them to the domestic realm alone. The women found themselves with no other choice but to begrudgingly amalgamate, with some women who continuing their active role in politics as members of the National Party after the merger while others chose to step back from their roles. Emmie would not let this deter her from pursuing her own political aspirations outside of the organisation and she found herself being more involved than ever while honouring the sentiments of the women of the NVP:

“*Daar lê in die toekoms ‘n groot verantwoordlikheid op die Afrikanervrou* [In the future there lies a great responsibility for the Afrikaner woman.]”³⁴⁷

³⁴³ ARCA Cape National Party collection PV27, A11/1/1, *Die Burgeres*, December 1930.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ H. Reitz & H. Oost (eds.), *Die Nasionale Boek*, pp. 93-95.

³⁴⁶ L. Vincent, “A Cake of Soap”: the Volksmoeder Ideology and the Afrikaner Women’s Campaign for the Vote”, March 1998, nr. 433, presented at the University of the Witwatersrand, pp. 14-15.

³⁴⁷ ARCA Cape National Party collection PV 27, A11/1/1, *Die Burgeres*, August 1934, p. 35.

Chapter Three - The party and its politics – 1931-1937

*“Kies volk bo persone [chose the volk above individuals]”*³⁴⁸

This chapter will attempt to cover the complex and dynamic period of 1931 to 1937, with particular reference to the activities of the National Party during this time. Specific and sustained focus is paid to the work of DF Malan in this period.³⁴⁹ It is also the basis for mapping Emmie’s movements and actions given that she shared the stage with Malan on the highest rungs of the National Party structure. This period begins with the amalgamation of the nationalist women’s parties and concludes with an overseas trip for the Du Toit family after a turbulent and unstable time in their lives.

The 1930s would not be an easy decade for most South Africans. Acrimony and paranoia plagued the political scene with the ever-changing dynamics of these realms seeing the breakdown of longstanding relationships and the cutting of ties in the name of pride and the defence of one's standpoints. Much of the debate centred around the coalition and later fusion of J.B.M. Hertzog’s National Party and Jan Smuts’ South African Party that saw the breakaway of D.F. Malan and those loyal to him. A number of complex factors contributed to the general unease and uncertainty of the time but also saw the expansive development of the Afrikaner nationalist movement and the institutions that drove it forward.

The long claws of the Great Depression made their way to South Africa in the early 1930s with the effects leaving a lasting impact that permeated all facets of life for almost all citizens.³⁵⁰ With an economy heavily reliant on the agricultural and mineral sectors and a susceptibility to even the slightest fluctuations in demand, an overarching global slump saw a steep decline in demand for South African products.³⁵¹ Without a viable market to trade in, those directly employed and wholly reliant on these industries bore the brunt of the downturn, suffering terrible losses in profit and value.³⁵² The depression had devastating consequences on all South

³⁴⁸ *Die Volksblad*, 12 July 1934, “Mev Emmie du Toit oor die krisis in Kaapstad”, n.p.

³⁴⁹ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*.

³⁵⁰ The term citizen in this case is relative given that black South Africans either had qualified voting privileges or none at all. For the purpose of clarity, this refers to those born in one of the four provinces/colonies deemed as part of South Africa in this broader period.

³⁵¹ A. Minnaar: “The effects of the Great Depression (1929-1934) on South African White agriculture”, *The South African Journal of Economic History*, 8, 2, (1990), p. 84.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

Africans but for the sake of context and relation to the broader topic at hand, particular attention must be given to the effects of the slump on those either identifying as or being identified as Afrikaners.³⁵³ For most still living in rural towns and outer lying regions of the country, farming was at the core of daily life and a sustained economic downturn threatened the system as a whole as well as their individual survival. Trouble in the agricultural sector was compounded by a record-breaking drought affecting livestock and crop farming.³⁵⁴ Unemployment levels rose considerably and poverty was rife, driving a surge in migration to urban centres. An influx in job seekers put further strain on a struggling system that was suffering the consequences of a refusal to abandon the gold standard.³⁵⁵ The decision to adhere to the standard was spearheaded by Hertzog and Klasie Havenga, the latter a fellow seasoned politician and close friend of Emmie and Jacques. In opposition to their stance was another veteran of the system, Tielman Roos, himself a close friend and one-time sponsor of Colin, Emmie's brother. Fierce debate surrounded the idea of abandonment but Hertzog held out on his sentiments, a decision that would play an important role in the years that followed shortly thereafter.³⁵⁶

In the wake of the economic downturn, new attention was given to the social and economic upliftment of white South Africans adversely affected by the droughts, rapid urbanisation and slump in economic growth. The Carnegie Commission was set up to identify and draft solutions to solve what was deemed the "poor white problem" through social policy and general welfare.³⁵⁷ The commission draw on numerous disciplines, some of which would now be seen as outright immoral and nefarious (think eugenics and social Darwinism) with others having somewhat more genuine undertones in uplifting the poor with empathy and assistance.³⁵⁸ Uplifting a marginalised portion of the white population through welfare and financial means could also help bolster electorate statistics and help win seats in white constituencies, further

³⁵³ As noted previously, in this case, Afrikaners refers to white Afrikaans speaking men and women who identify themselves as such. They engage in cultural and social practices associated with Afrikaners that includes but is not limited to being a member of an Afrikaans speaking, Calvinist orientated religious group, a shared white-centric history and a common tongue.

³⁵⁴ A. Minnaar: "The effects of the Great Depression (1929-1934) on South African White agriculture", *The South African Journal of Economic History*, 8, 2, (1990), p. 83.

³⁵⁵ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 245.

³⁵⁶ The gold standard was eventually abandoned in 1933 and was mediated by Roos. His efforts are widely regarded as having eased some of the pressure on the economy and helped to lessen the impact of the global recession.

³⁵⁷ See J.F.W. Grosskopf (et al.): *The poor white problem in South Africa: report of the Carnegie Commission*, 1932, Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

alienating indigenous and other non-white population groups. Academics, clergymen and economists were tasked to root out the problem, the result being a five-volume document outlining target groups, areas and proposals for combatting the issue.³⁵⁹ One of the main investigators in the commission was M.E.R. (Maria Elizabeth Rothman) the eponymous leader of the ACVV and driver of Afrikaner women and children's upliftment through welfare programs. M.E.R. would drive the efforts of the ACVV but would also find herself as a member of the highest executives of the National Party and the *Ossewabrandwag*, alongside Emmie, in the years that followed.³⁶⁰

Having been granted the vote, South African women found themselves with new opportunities to engage and be active participants in political matters. Their new found freedom and political autonomy did not necessarily have an immediate or resounding impact on deep seated views on the place of women in society or their ability to participate in the processes but the door had been pushed ajar to make way for new faces in already familiar spaces. For the most part, nationalist Afrikaner women had found a sense of purpose in working for their respective parties and had been contributing to the larger National Party in ways that could be seen as having done more proactive and "on-the-ground" type work that the men were not always willing to do. For instance, a significant portion of the funding for the party came from the events that were organised and run by the women.³⁶¹ Their independent mouthpiece, *Die Burgeres*, had grown in its popularity and readership through the efforts of regional leaders who travelled across the country giving talks and encouraging active participation in political matters.³⁶² There was a concerted effort to unify and mobilise the *volk* and women were expected to play their part just as any other. In broader terms, there had been an explicit politicisation of the *volksmoeder* concept over time whereby the home was deemed a space where the future of the *volk* was to be nurtured by their ethnically orientated parents, with their mothers being both primary caregivers and prime sources of information. Women were encouraged to be advocates for Afrikanerdom and raise their children to do the same.

³⁵⁹ J.F.W. Grosskopf (et al.): *The poor white problem in South Africa: report of the Carnegie Commission*, 1932, Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia.

³⁶⁰ M.E.R.'s involvement in both the National Party and the *Ossewabrandwag* are outlined in her autobiography, M.E.R.: *My Beskeie Deel: 'n outobiografiese vertelling*. Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 1972.

³⁶¹ L.Vincent, "The Power Behind the Scenes: The Afrikaner Nationalist Women's Parties, 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1 (May 1999), pp. 51-73.

³⁶² See *Burgeres* publications in ARCA Cape National Party collection PV27, A11/1/1 & A11/1/2.

Emmie, alongside many of her contemporaries, had entered the 1930s as a woman on a mission with a sustained involvement in politics being a core focus. Having already been an active participant in the NVP for as long a time as family responsibilities would allow, she was well acquainted with the processes that governed party politics and the formal structuring of the system. Initially, the NVP and the VNP were spaces in which women could articulate themselves entirely in their own terms without much interference and, in spite of their obligatory amalgamation, the women of the National Party did not disappear entirely from the political scene with many instead finding new positions of power amongst the men. They had lost their independence but not their drive or passion for the work that they felt needed to be done. They still participated in the upper echelons of the management and governance of the four bodies of the party from a localised branch level with a contingent being elected to the numerous committees and bodies responsible for running the party.³⁶³ *Die Burgeres* continued to be published after the amalgamation and focused on disseminating nationalist orientated propaganda encouraging Afrikaner women to continue their active support and participation in the party.³⁶⁴ Their focus also remained on reaching outer lying regions where support was continuously being challenged and fought over.

No less than three months after the NP congress of 1930, Emmie was elected to the committee of the Cape Town branch of the party, being made vice-chairperson of the group under chairman T.E. Dönges.³⁶⁵ The NVP had not been the space in which Emmie had found her true purpose having only served on a handful of organising committees and as a local representative for her suburb. Her energy had instead naturally been focused on raising her four children. Her three daughters and young son required her full attention and with a husband whose practice required its own extensive attention, Emmie was kept busy with attending to her brood and managing their household. This did not mean that she had been out of the political loop and her ever expanding circle of friends and associates kept her well informed of the intrigue and drama of the Cape scene that she may have missed. Politically, Emmie still found that the calls for the republican ideal and the unification of Afrikaners as an ethnic group rang true and that some of the most important times for the *volk* were yet to come.

³⁶³ See numerous National Party Congress agendas and proceedings in KAB A969 Box 14.

³⁶⁴ See *Burgeres* publications in ARCA Cape National Party collection PV27, A11/1/1 & A11/1/2.

³⁶⁵ Dönges was a high-ranking member of the party and would serve as a member of parliament from 1941 to the early 1960s after which he was elected as State President. Prior to his untimely passing before taking office as such, Dönges also served as leader of the Cape party and as acting Prime Minister after the assassination of Hendrik Verwoerd in 1966.

It has always been clear that Emmie had her sights set on the political sphere above all others, even if that meant being the quintessential hostess in the process. In clearer terms, Emmie was not going to ever be a pioneer in her involvement or work with social welfare organisations and groups like the ACVV, especially not on a grassroots level. Her focus and ambitions always lay in bodies and groupings that lay at the top of the proverbial chain, never straying far enough from the epicentre so as to miss a beat or piece of new information. The crowd of Cape socialites and movers was just as much a part of the political scene as they were the highbrow tea and dinner parties that they frequented on the off chance that were not otherwise engaged, men and women included. Access was always given to the outspoken daughter of the ultimate republican idealists, the same woman who had essentially been working as the “first daughter” to Mynie and Gen. Hertzog since their earliest times at Groote Schuur in the mid 20s and who took it upon herself to drive her old friend Malan to and from his various meeting points in the city when his failing eyesight or poor attention span did not allow him to do so himself.³⁶⁶ Nothing made it past her keen eye and even keener ear.³⁶⁷

Emmie retained her role as socialite and hostess and spent a considerable amount of time as a member of the Cape social elite. In particular, she continued her remarkably close relationship with Mynie Hertzog and as a close friend, Emmie was a regular guest at the Wednesday tea parties held at the official residence. Foreign dignitaries and politicians as well as their partners were often guests at these parties and it was here that Emmie would strike up relationships that would span decades and cross continents.³⁶⁸ Her network truly knew no bounds and by all accounts, Emmie’s inherent sociability allowed her to strike up conversations that held one’s interest long after she had walk away. One such relationship was with Verena Clarendon, wife of the 6th Earl of Clarendon George Villiers who served as the 5th Governor-General of South Africa. Verena was also remarkably close with Tibbie Steyn and the two regularly corresponded throughout the Clarendon’s time in the country.³⁶⁹ The couple would have been far closer in age to her mother and yet Emmie retained a particularly close bond with Verena. Throughout their correspondence, there is a distinct sense of ease and familiarity between the women, with Verena almost serving as a mother figure to Emmie when her own was not in the Cape.

³⁶⁶ OB transcript, p. 11.

³⁶⁷ Interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019.

³⁶⁸ KAB A969 Box 1, numerous guest and invitation lists.

³⁶⁹ KAB A969 Box 13, Emmie – Verena Clarendon & ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/5.

This is a common thread in Emmie's life, that of forming and retaining close relationships with older, more established couples or individuals and in particular, those either involved in or well informed of politics. It does not take much to see where this may have stemmed from. From an early age, the youngest Steyn child had always been surrounded by those older than herself, be it family, friends or colleagues whilst often being encouraged to participate in discussions with guests who were present in their home. As a young woman, Emmie was already notorious for her sharp tongue and quick wit that were soon remedied by her humour, traits that followed through to her later adult life. People appear to have been drawn to her and the list of correspondents she maintained would have been the envy of many. She was also sure that she would come to play a role in this period, be it as a representation of the 'ideals' associated with her family and their name or as an actor in the political game. Marrying these two ideas may even be seen as the best possible outcome and there would not be a shortage of opportunities for her to use her name to her advantage over the years to come. Emmie championed the notion of working for her people to their benefit all focusing on raising her family to uphold the idea of what it was to be an Afrikaner.

As a family, the Du Toit home was a sight for entertaining and discussing the matters of the day. The initial stages of the 1930s were a relatively stable period in their home. Emmie and Jacques had upheld their ideal of having their children surrounded by Afrikaans language and culture having enrolled all of them at Jan van Riebeeck Primary School in Gardens.³⁷⁰ Up until this point, Emmie had remained largely out of the "spotlight", instead focusing her energy on serving the local Cape Town branch of the party and managing her children. Klein Jacques was in the early stages of his formal schooling and the three girls were at various stages of their primary school educations. Their home continued to pay host to their family and friends who were in need of a place to stay on their trips to the city. Nico van der Merwe, Emmie's brother-in-law and MP for Winburg was often with them and regularly wrote to the two Tibbies from *Vreugde*.³⁷¹ He and Emmie accompanied one another on outings and spent a great deal of time together at official events. Nico was an integral part of the National Party structure and shared many of the same views and values that Emmie and Jacques did along with mutual relationships with the major role players in the party and broader politics. This shared vision would be put

³⁷⁰ The school was established in 1921 and served as one of the only Afrikaans medium schools in the area. See <https://laerskooljanvanriebeek.co.za/geskiedenis/>.

³⁷¹ ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/6, numerous letters from Nico van der Merwe to Tibbie van der Merwe outlining his daily activities written out on parliamentary letterheads therefore denoting his presence in the Cape.

to use in what would become an entirely divisive period, with Nico noting some of the more obvious differences in the Malan-Hertzog relationship in his correspondence to his mother-in-law in the early stages of 1933.³⁷²

The year began with the customary arrival of Tibbie for the opening of parliament and the celebration of her and Jacques' birthdays.³⁷³ Their festivities and Tibbie's overall stay were marred by the stirring unease surrounding the proposed coalition between Smuts' SAP and Hertzog's NP with the upcoming mid-May election. Emmie could not believe that the idea was even being floated never mind seriously considered by Hertzog, so much so that she requested a meeting with the Prime Minister at Groote Schuur to hear the words from his own mouth.³⁷⁴ What she got from the discussion was an assurance that there was no truth to the rumours and that she simply need not worry about it.³⁷⁵ Opinions varied on the subject of a coalition between the two parties and the extended Steyn family was almost as divided as Hertzog's cabinet. Tibbie walked a thin line in this regard as she watched her children slowly take their respective sides in the saga while attempting to remain true to her lifelong friends and her own values. There was an added complexity in the re-emergence of Tielman Roos who had made a short-lived but triumphant return to politics and to whom some members of the Steyn family were particularly close.³⁷⁶ Roos had a less than complimentary reputation and had always been at loggerheads with Malan, often purposely undermining him or attempting to exert some form of dominance in the halls of parliament.³⁷⁷

Malan was opposed to the coalition from the outset and had a large following of fellow MP's and other senior members of the party that affiliated themselves with the disdain that he felt towards the proposition.³⁷⁸ Many, if not most that echoed his sentiments, were members of the Cape party with several forming a part of Malan's inner circle with Emmie and Jacques both aligning themselves with their long-time friend and neighbour.³⁷⁹ In the months preceding the

³⁷² ARCA I.G. Visser collection, PV181, 2/1/1/6, Nico van der Merwe – Tibbie van der Merwe, 3 June 1933.

³⁷³ *Die Volksblad*, 6 March 1933, "Mev Pres. Steyn verjaar", n.p.

³⁷⁴ *Die Volksblad*, 12 July 1934, "Mev Emmie du Toit oor die krisis in Kaapstad", n.p.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ Roos had financially supported Colin after his breakdown several years before and felt a strong obligation to support his friend out of sheer loyalty. See E. Truter: "Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955, Unpublished D.Phil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 222, footnote 108.

³⁷⁷ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 227.

³⁷⁸ These opponents came from all four provinces with a distinctive opposition stemming from the Cape party.

³⁷⁹ Malan lived not far from the Du Toit's in Sea Point. See L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*. There was a distinctive nationalist enclave of politicians who all lived in a series of blocks in Sea Point within walking distance of each other.

special party congress that was set to convene in De Aar in March, the Cape Town branch was focused on retaining their figures and ensuring that none of their constituents would falter and join the ranks of Roos' attempt at a political party.³⁸⁰ Emmie was put forward, be it willingly or by persuasion, to use her influence and relationship to approach Hertzog and ask that he come to address an audience regarding the questions Malan had posed to him.³⁸¹ This would have been in conjunction with the *Hoofbestuur's* deputation that approached Hertzog to obtain assurances regarding party nominations and the unopposed running in the upcoming election.³⁸²

The August meeting of the branch would be attended almost entirely by the women of the local executive, many of whom were the partners of prominent party men with the official minutes for the meeting leaving much to the imagination regarding the committee members' true feelings regarding the latest coalition. The wives of Karl Bremer and Advocate Frans Erasmus, two stalwarts of the NP and firm supporters of Malan attended in their stead.³⁸³ Enfranchised South Africans took to the poles on the 17th May, marking the first election that white South African women could participate alongside an increased number of white men over the age of 21.³⁸⁴ The usual 150 parliamentary seats were contested with the National Party winning 75 of the available spaces and the South African Party trailing relatively closely behind with 61. Hertzog remained as Prime Minister with Smuts as his deputy as the two formally formed their NP-SAP coalition, much to the chagrin of the Malan cohort.

At this same meeting, Emmie was chosen as the delegate that would represent the group at the De Aar congress the following week.³⁸⁵ It would be a difficult few days in the small Karoo town as Hertzog and Malan worked to undo one another in front of their fellow nationalists with the threat of a split in the party looming ever closer.³⁸⁶ It ended with an agreement to remain unified as a party but also fleshed out the distinct regional differences and the lengths people were willing to go to retain their seats in parliament. Malan's efforts in De Aar had been a step in the right direction for his support in the Cape and the local branch continued to endorse

³⁸⁰ ARCA Cape National Party collection, PV27, 1/5/1/17/1, Cape Town branch minutes, 12 January 1933.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 256, fn 52.

³⁸³ ARCA Cape National Party collection, PV27, 1/5/1/17/1, Cape Town branch minutes, 8 August 1933.

³⁸⁴ The qualifying factors of wage earnings and property ownership for white men had been removed to increase the franchise and further alienate and exclude black qualified voters in the Cape Province and Natal.

³⁸⁵ ARCA Cape National Party collection, PV27, 1/5/1/17/1, Cape Town branch minutes, 7 March 1933.

³⁸⁶ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp. 256-262.

their leader in spite of his losing his position as a minister in Hertzog's government. Their meeting on the 8th of August saw the return of Malan to their fold with Emmie constituting one of three executives who would draw up a list of resolutions that would be put forward to the congress at a later stage.³⁸⁷



Figure 7: Emmie in 1935

The congress of the Cape National Party drew closer and was to be held in Port Elizabeth in early October 1933. Emmie and Jacques made the trip to the coast and were in attendance for what turned out to be an even more eventful and challenging congress than what most could have imagined. Hertzog and Malan once again came to blows over the question of coalition with the added complexity of the possibility of a fully-fledged fusion with Smuts' SAP rearing its head.³⁸⁸ After a day of sustained losses in the debate against Malan, Hertzog left the congress early without warning.³⁸⁹

Amongst the general upset, Emmie was awarded a position on the Federal Council as well as the *Hoofbestuur* or executive of the Cape Party, roles that she would consider and fulfil with high esteem. It would be the first of several years on both bodies with the council for one serving as the sounding board through which party policy and motions were given final say. The council would meet only once a year as a collective and consisted of representatives from the four parties of the respective provinces. Nico van der Merwe, Emmie's brother-in-law also formed part of the council as a representative of the Free State alongside other old

³⁸⁷ ARCA Cape National Party collection, PV27, 1/5/1/17/1, Cape Town branch minutes, 8 August 1933.

³⁸⁸ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp. 274-275.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

acquaintances including Frans Erasmus, Mabel Malherbe and Mabel Jansen who represented the Cape, the Transvaal and Natal respectively.³⁹¹

The first meeting Emmie would attend in her new capacity as a member of the council was in Bloemfontein only a week after the events of the Port Elizabeth congress. It was at this council meeting that the discussion of “*samesmelting, vereniging en hereniging*” [merging/fusion, union and reunification] took centre stage, mirroring the previous weeks’ events.³⁹³ Hertzog led the Free State delegation and motioned that the establishment of the coalition government in the preceding months meant that fusion with Smuts’ SAP was the next logical step for the National Party as a collective.³⁹⁴ Furthermore, he suggested that the leaders of the two parties should meet as soon as possible to draw up plans and programs that could be put forward to the caucus at the following congress’.³⁹⁵ The Transvaal and Natal did not add much to the discussion, with their representatives, Minister P. Grobler and Senator Spies simply agreeing that they would mirror the actions of the Free State.³⁹⁶ The Cape however made it decidedly clear that they would not be in agreement with the proposal instead suggesting that the two parties retain their independence and commit to the process of “*hereniging*”, the reunification and merging of what Malan called the “*Nasionale Party elemente binne die Suid-Afrikaanse Party wat nooit daar tuis was nie*” [National Party elements within the South African Party that were never ‘at home’ or fully accepted].³⁹⁷ Malan felt that the differences between the two parties were simply too great to allow for a true fusion that would see viable results and outcomes and that splitting the National Party would essentially dilute its power.³⁹⁸

The meeting was adjourned without a final decision having been taken and Hertzog stating that he would approach Smuts with the proposal once he received suggestions and recommendations from the provincial representatives that had mirrored his sentiments.³⁹⁹ The Cape wanted nothing more to do with the motion and made it known to the meeting in just as many words. The lines had been drawn and it would be several months before the situation

³⁹¹ ARCA National Party Federal Council collection PV54, 2/1, 13 October 1933. Emmie had known all three for a number of years and maintained a close relationship and regular correspondence with Mabel Jansen in particular. Jansen was the wife of E.G. Jansen, the parliamentarian, long time National Party man and later Governor General.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

would truly come to a head. Emmie returned to the Cape and her family, having left Jacques in charge of their home, albeit only for a few days. Jacques had been busy in his own respect with an endless array of patients who sought his expertise and never had to look far for help in managing both his practice and his children while Emmie attended to her business.⁴⁰⁰ The eldest of their brood, Iona, was approaching the end of her primary school going years while the rest were still a little further off from moving on to the next phase of their schooling careers. As the year came to an end, the family looked forward to the upcoming visit of their matriarch, Tibbie, and all of the events and occasions that surrounded her annual pilgrimage.

1934 ushered in an impending sense of trepidation and speculation as to what the future of the NP-SAP relationship would look like. The annual congress for the Cape party would take place several months earlier than the previous years, a move not entirely unexpected given the gravity of the issues that needed to be discussed. The distinct regional differences in opinions and standpoints were seen in the debates that raged on in the newspapers with little being held back from all sides of the spectrum. Tibbie made her way to the Cape in the midst of the angst and found herself caught between her children and their spouses who had settled on altogether different views. Tibbie herself stood by her old friend Hertzog and believed that he could find a way forward with Smuts given their history together. Colin chose to stand by Tielman Roos, seemingly out of pure loyalty for the fact that Roos had financially and emotionally supported Colin through his breakdown and subsequent health troubles.⁴⁰¹ Colin surprisingly found a fellow Roos supporter in his sister Gladys who even went so far as to stand for the provincial council as a follower of his policies.⁴⁰²

Their eldest sister Hannah wanted nothing more than to stay away from the debate, herself having settled on having a quieter life that focused more on her children than it did on being involved in politics or social activities. She followed on from their mother's view and felt that "*jare van vriendskap kan nie deur 'n handdruk vergewe en vergeet word nie*" [years of friendship cannot be forgiven and forgotten with a handshake].⁴⁰³ Emmie, the younger Tibbie and Nico could not have been any more different, fully investing themselves in the saga,

⁴⁰⁰ KAB A969 Box 3, various letters of thanks to Dr Du Toit. The family had several staff who took care of the actual duties of the home when their employers were otherwise disposed.

⁴⁰¹ E. Truter: "Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 222.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

standing firm behind Malan and his view that fusion would not do the NP any good.⁴⁰⁴ This was also in spite of Nico being a member of the Free State's Federal Council deputation led by Hertzog that had essentially spearheaded the suggestion in the first place. Tibbie wrote to friends that her family had never been split over matters such as this and the fact that the increasingly hostile situation saw her children at loggerheads with one another was something that made her remarkably uncomfortable and disheartened.⁴⁰⁵ It seems that Emmie, herself no stranger to differences in opinions and a good debate, felt no real discomfort at being at odds with her siblings and mother, instead feeling that the ambitions and future of the *volk* outweighed the frivolity of relationships and the emotions surrounding them.⁴⁰⁶

As the July congress loomed, Emmie continued her work on the executive of the Cape Town branch of the party, serving as the chairperson in many of the monthly meetings that were held to discuss the way forward.⁴⁰⁷ The leaders of the areas and suburbs that fell under the branch were instructed to hold their meetings as normal and encourage their constituents to voice their views on the fusion proposal as well as attend the meetings in which Karl Bremer and Henry Fagan, both members of the branch and Cape Party executives, would explain and discuss the semantics of the affair.⁴⁰⁸ At a meeting of the Cape *Hoofbestuur* in February, Hertzog gave assurances, on paper no less, that a "*program van beginsels*" would be drawn up that aligned and clarified the principles for the party going forward.⁴¹⁰ The assurances were to be presented to Smuts with their contents being known to most, if not all, of the Cape NP constituents.⁴¹¹ The results of the presentation and its rebuttals would only be made known to the larger caucus at the upcoming congress in Somerset West but would first be discussed at the annual meeting of the Federal Council in Pretoria on the 20th of June.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁴ E. Truter: "Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 222.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.* See footnote 116.

⁴⁰⁶ See Emmie's sentiments highlighted at the opening of this chapter, as quoted in *Die Volksblad*, 12 July 1934, "Mev Emmie du Toit oor die krisis in Kaapstad", n.p.

⁴⁰⁷ ARCA Cape National Party collection, PV27, 1/5/1/17/1, Cape Town branch minutes, April 1934.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ *Die Volksblad*, 12 July 1934, "Mev Emmie du Toit oor die krisis in Kaapstad".

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² ARCA Cape National Party collection, PV27, 1/5/1/17/1, Cape Town branch minutes, April 1934.

For the first of the meetings, the Cape deputation made their way to the Transvaal as a group with Emmie being joined by Malan, Frans Erasmus and Willie Hofmeyr with the party covering the costs for the trip.⁴¹³ Malan would not need accommodation for the stay and would only need his travel costs to be covered with the two other men in the party each costing the organisation nearly £5. For some reason, Emmie's hotel stay and travel costs would amount to nearly £18 for what one would assume to be the same facilities and travel arrangements.⁴¹⁴ Perhaps her penchant for the finer things in life was not limited to the boundaries of her home but one can only speculate in this regard. Expensive hotel stays aside, the purpose of the trip was to gain final assurances from Hertzog ahead of the congress the following month with the results being less than satisfactory for the men and women of the Cape. The document that Hertzog presented spoke of the plans of both himself and Smuts going forward with almost no mention of the involvement of the Federal Council in the decision-making process.⁴¹⁵

This was seen as a massive undermining of the council and its members, with Malan referring to the understanding having been that Hertzog would work with the council to decide the way forward and not have the focus lie on Smuts and his party.⁴¹⁶ Hertzog had then gone on to publish the contents of the document in the newspaper before the council had even caught sight of it.⁴¹⁷ To add insult to injury, Hertzog claimed that he had not made the assurances that the Cape members claimed he did, effectively setting the tone for the weeks to come with the Cape constituents not continuing the process without getting a word, or several, in edgeways.⁴¹⁸ All five representatives alongside Nico van der Merwe of the OFS and Mabel Jansen of Natal voted against Hertzog and his proposal but still found themselves overruled by the majority that they felt was dominated by those closest to the Prime Minister.⁴¹⁹

Emmie had long been feeling that her old friend and near father figure would not always play by the same rules she had come to expect him to. Their close relationship also meant that

⁴¹³ Willie Hofmeyr was a lawyer and first chair of the board of directors for the Nasionale Pers. He also formed part of Malan, and by extension, Emmie's close circle of friends and colleagues. See L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism* for more on their relationship and his role in the party and their broader circle.

⁴¹⁴ ARCA Federal Council collection PV54 1/1, Internal correspondence, invoice for travel expenses from F.C. Erasmus, 26 June 1924.

⁴¹⁵ *Die Volksblad*, 12 July 1934, "Mev Emmie du Toit oor die krisis in Kaapstad", n.p.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.* Hertzog reportedly halfheartedly penciled in the words "Federal Council" after the fact in an effort to placate Malan.

⁴¹⁷ OB transcript, p. 24.

⁴¹⁸ The Cape representatives would abstain from voting in many of the motions put forward in the meeting on the 20th of June with Malan all but reciting the constitution of the party in Hertzog's face in his case against fusion.

⁴¹⁹ *Die Volksblad*, 21 June 1934; 12 July 1934 "Mev Emmie du Toit oor die krisis in Kaapstad", n.p.

Emmie could speak with him in ways that many others could only have dreamed of. As early as 1926, Emmie recalls having her suspicions of the General and others in his ranks, regarding their intentions and the overall way the cards seemed to be dealt in the political scene with people being more than willing to forgo relationships and more so, their values in the name of their political ambitions.⁴²⁰ The flag saga of 1926/1927 saw Hertzog and Malan fight tooth and nail for their cause while others faltered at signs of trouble or conflict. Emmie truly believed that the same would be true when it came to elections and the eternal struggle for power, a somewhat naïve belief that those fighting for that power would always be doing it for the good of the people that they claimed to represent.

The *volk* was always meant to come first, just as their leaders had done when her own family had risked their lives before she was even able to grasp the reality of what it was to go to war. So, when the news of a planned coalition and later proposed fusion of the parties broke in 1933 and 1934 respectively, it is safe to say that Emmie's illusions of *volkseenheid* were seemingly becoming just that, illusions. Hertzog's undermining of the council left a bad taste in her mouth and the events of the congress the following month would not do anything to better them. She was taunted as "*een van die sewe wat nie haar weg oop gesien het om die Hertzog-Smuts-basis te onderskryf nie*" [one of the seven who could not see a clear way of supporting the Hertzog-Smuts arrangement].⁴²¹

The delegation's arrival back home in Cape Town was quite the affair with a large crowd gathered on the platform to welcome them. Jacques and Klein Jacques made the trip to the station to fetch Emmie but not before several photo opportunities were capitalised on to mark their return. There was clearly an awareness of just how important the meeting in Pretoria had been and many would have been anxious to learn of any and all news from those closest to the action. Before they would make the short trip to Somerset West the following month, the Cape Town branch held their last meeting before the congress. Emmie would not be present for this particular meeting but a statement issued by the *Hoofbestuur* was read out during the session officially denouncing the fusion proposal as a step in the wrong direction for the "South African *volk*".⁴²² With their constituents on the same page, Emmie was invited to a meeting of National Party officials and members in Philippolis in early July where she gave a speech that can only

⁴²⁰ OB transcript, p. 24.

⁴²¹ *Die Volksblad*, 12 July 1934, "Mev Emmie du Toit oor die krisis in Kaapstad".

⁴²² ARCA Cape National Party collection, PV27, 1/5/1/17/1, Cape Town branch minutes, 26 June 1934.

be described as scathing and damning.⁴²³ Short of spelling out the word for word conversations the council held behind closed doors, Emmie made her views on Hertzog clear. She felt betrayed by his ability to submit to pressures from below and his perceived willingness to bend to the whims of Smuts, essentially denouncing any faith and trust she may have once had for the old friend of her family and long-time confidant and sometime advisor.⁴²⁴

With the ink barely dry on the front page of the newspapers that theorised the outcomes of the fusion discussions, Emmie attended the 19th congress of the Cape National Party as a member of both the Federal Council and *Hoofbestuur* with every intention of honouring her duties as a representative of her *volk* in the pursuit of the ever elusive republican ideal. On the first day of the congress, the Federal Council issued a lengthy statement that essentially outlined the events of the nine months that had passed since the last meeting in Port Elizabeth.⁴²⁶ On top of a scathing report regarding Hertzog's handling of the entire situation, the council essentially issued a final ultimatum to the Prime Minister that included new nationalist and Afrikaner orientated ideals should it come to the fusion and the establishment of a new ruling party.⁴²⁷ If he could not find viable solutions and workarounds to accommodate the wishes of all districts of the party, the council questioned the viability of the National Party in its entirety even going so far as to suggest putting the question to the congress.⁴²⁸ Despite the generally serious tone of their statement, there was also a distinct feeling of optimism for the number of delegates that had attended the congress as well as sentiments around the spirit of nationalism still being alive and well in Cape Town in spite of the efforts of others.⁴²⁹

⁴²³ *Die Volksblad*, 12 July 1934, "Mev Emmie du Toit oor die krisis in Kaapstad". The piece was published as a lengthy feature and made enough of an impression that many that knew the family were well aware of the very public showing of anger and frustration from the youngest of the Steyn brood.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁶ KAB A969 Box 14, "Die Nasionale Party van die Kaapprovinsie: Notule van die Negentiende Kongres, Somerset-Wes", 25 July 1934.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.* Emmie was re-elected to both of her positions on the executive and Federal Council.



Figure 8: The “*Gesuiwerde*” National Party Federal Council in 1936. Back row from L-R: Dr T.C. Visser; H Tromp; **Emmie**; C.R. Swart; Sen. T.C. Stofberg; E. van Schalkwyk; J.G. Strijdom; W.A. (Willie) Hofmeyr. Middle row L-R: C.J.H. de Wet; J. Lombard; Mabel Jansen; D.F. Malan; N.J. van der Merwe; E. de Villiers. Seated L-R: M.J. Vermeulen; F.C. Erasmus

On the evening of the second day of the congress, Malan once again addressed the delegates and the results of the annual executive were read out. The congress claimed a majority victory that rejected the dissolution of the Cape NP instead motioning that the executive see to it that they revise a program of principles in collaboration with the numerous organisational bodies of the party in order to adapt to the changing conditions while using their already proposed principles as their frame of reference.⁴³⁰ The result of this decision not only in the Cape but in the other provinces essentially meant that those that constituted the Cape National Party as well as the small pockets of dissident Malan supporters in the Free State, the Transvaal and Natal were now considered the National Party. As noted in Koorts’ explanation around the new party, popular belief has led to the impression that the new cohort went by the name of the

⁴³⁰ KAB A969 Box 14, “Die Nasionale Party van die Kaapprovinsie: Notule van die Negentiende Kongres, Somerset-Wes”, 25 July 1934. & L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp. 300-301. In the days that followed the Cape congress, Nico van der Merwe left the Free State NP congress in the middle of the gathering along with several fellow Malanites after the dissolution of the Free State caucus after a ruling in favour of joining a new fusion party. The same process followed in the Transvaal.

“*Gesuiwerde*” or “Purified” National Party despite never actually formally adopting the name.⁴³¹ It does not appear on any official paperwork but was used colloquially when referring to the group of ‘dissenters’, many of whom claimed the title with pride while others outside of the fold used it in more derogatory terms.⁴³² Further to this, this meant that the power base for the party lay in the Cape, with Emmie continuing to occupy not one, but two positions on the highest bodies that governed the internal processes of the party.

It would be remiss to think that Emmie’s interest and ability to be this intimately involved in the higher rungs of the party rested entirely on her name or reputation. She held a genuine and consistent interest in the politics of her people and the efforts that were being made to secure their chances of realising their republican ideals. Furthermore, her friendships and relationships with key role players in these spaces are a testament to the mutual goals and intentions that had long been established between them. This interest and passion clearly made enough of an impact on these contemporaries and peers for a lack of faith in her abilities would have never seen her elected to any of the federal or executive branches as many times as she would be. These councils and bodies also saw a number of other female nationalists elected to their respective provincial seats, many with experience having fulfilled similar roles in the women’s parties and other nationalist affiliated organisations. Emmie had not been operating in a vacuum, instead finding herself in the company of equally competent and passionate women, many of whom were operating under very different circumstances and had come from remarkably different backgrounds than her own. These women all invested their time and energy into their party activities and often went above and beyond the call of duty to contribute towards the nationalist effort.⁴³³

With the establishment of the new party out of the way, the stress and strain of the weeks that had just gone by had caught up to Emmie but the energy of her young family that welcomed her home renewed her tired mind. Never one to rest on her laurels, at the following meeting of the Cape Town branch, Emmie suggested the organisation of a “National Party day” to bring together their somewhat fractured constituents who had borne witness to the on goings of those

⁴³¹ See L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism* footnote 2, p. 436. The party will therefore be referred to the National Party from here for the sake of clarity.

⁴³² *Ibid.*

⁴³³ These women included Mabel Jansen, Mrs E. van Schalkwyk and Mrs E. de Villiers who served alongside Emmie on the Federal Council. Mrs E.C. van der Lingen also wrote extensively on her experience and observations as a nationalist woman with her writings being held in Stellenbosch Special Collections, MC416.

elected to lead them.⁴³⁴ Emmie would lead the group of women tasked with organising the day that would also serve as an income generator for the new party. True to her nature, she sought to find ways that would unify rather than divide, a necessary trait so desperately required in a period of distrust and faltering loyalty. This unifying attempt would need to be replicated by the smaller groupings of their northern counterparts in the Transvaal and Free State ahead of the Federal Council meeting in Bloemfontein on the 7th of November 1934.⁴³⁵

The first meeting of the new party set the primary focus of the upcoming months to a review of the principles and the constitution intended to govern its members and their activities, a process that would end up taking more than a year of negotiation and bartering to even vaguely agree on a unified plan of action.⁴³⁶ Amongst the back and forth, the three regional bodies held their respective conferences that saw the election of Nico van der Merwe and Mabel Jansen to the leadership in the Free State and Transvaal respectively.⁴³⁷ The proceedings of these meetings also saw a renewed drive for the pursuit of the republican ideal that Emmie had been espousing since her earliest days in the party.⁴³⁸ The Cape nationalists appeared to maintain a watered down and more measured approach to the topic instead focusing on matters that did not warrant any direct showing of discontent for the British monarch and the role that their representative, the Governor General played in the Cape. The irony of course being, that for all of her republican rhetoric, Emmie was remarkably close with the sitting Governor General, the Earl of Clarendon and his wife Verena, the very people truly staunch republicans would want to be removed from the system.⁴³⁹ This what one might call borderline hypocrisy was not exactly unheard of. For as much as she was a nationalist and republican idealist, Emmie wanted to retain her image as the “Boer aristocrat” that meant keeping up appearances and playing all sides of the spectrum.

This idea further drove Emmie’s rationale of being able to see a bigger picture beyond the individual and to focus her energy on the process that would ultimately benefit the majority, in this case the Afrikaner *volk*. At the first Federal Council meeting of 1935, the republicans of the Transvaal came out in full force and illustrated the distinctive intentions of each of the three

⁴³⁴ ARCA Cape National Party collection, PV27, 1/5/1/17/1, Cape Town branch minutes, 14 August 1934.

⁴³⁵ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 302.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 302-303.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 303. Jansen had moved to the Transvaal from Natal and was elected to lead the party alongside Hans Strijdom and C.J.H. de Wet.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ See earlier description of the Clarendon family.

regions and the fact that not all parties were fully on board with the ideal just yet.⁴⁴⁰ This was later reflected in the Federal Council's ruling that a republic would only be pursued with input from both English and Afrikaans speaking white South Africans that constituted a majority. For the time being, the matter would not be pursued with as much vigour as what many would have hoped and attention was turned to slightly more pressing matters. In the October of 1934, the Carnegie Commission published its report on the 'poor white problem', spurring on discussions surrounding economic and social upliftment, the formalisation of segregation and immigration policy amongst others.⁴⁴¹ "*Volkseenheid*" or the unity of the *volk* was a key focus early on in the agenda and the council outlined hopes that the two white races in South Africa would work together for the sake of a unified front against black South Africans.⁴⁴² There were also less than subtle undertones of anti-Semitism beginning to show in some of the nationalist rhetoric, a trait not entirely uncommon in the period but one that would properly rear its ugly head in a few short years.⁴⁴³ Over this specific period, it is difficult to gauge exactly where Emmie stood in this regard with no sentiments being directly attributed to her but her affiliation and involvement in circles that did do the talking says more than enough to make tentative assumptions.

While the beginning of 1935 had been relatively peaceful, the second half of the year could not have turned out to be any more different for Emmie. With Iona and Nerina at boarding school in Paarl and Stellenbosch and the two youngest du Toit children still at home in Sea Point, all signs pointed to the year following the same pattern their domestic lives had for a number of years. Tibbie would make her way to the Cape and the usual guests would flow through their doors, Jacques would continue his work at the increasingly busy practice and their children would carry on with their educations at schools that were suited to their upbringings as members of one of the most recognisable Afrikaner families in the country. Emmie continued her work on the local Cape Town branch executive, arranging meetings and organising for new speakers to present their stories to the constituents.⁴⁴⁴ On the 31st of May she attended and offered her support as a leader to the recently founded Junior National Party's conference in

⁴⁴⁰ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 304.

⁴⁴¹ ARCA Federal Council collection PV54 2/4, Federal Council minutes, 5 July 1935.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³ Given the historical context, anti-Semitism was on the rise not only in South Africa but globally too with a growing interest in the implementation of fascism in Western Europe under Mussolini and Hitler respectively. Emmie would have been well aware of these sentiments and was in possession of a Mussolini era propaganda pamphlet that highlighted the "outstanding results" on the Italian economy and people through fascist governance, titled "Italy: What is it?". This can be found in the du Toit KAB collection Box 21.

⁴⁴⁴ ARCA Cape National Party collection, PV27, 1/5/1/17/1, Cape Town branch minutes, 5 Feb 1935.

Somerset West where her niece, Tibbie van der Merwe was elected to a leadership position.⁴⁴⁵ The conference was a success and the year was set to continue as well as what one could expect.

In mid-August 1935, Emmie went for an intensive operation that saw an extensive recovery period and an immense amount of pain management. Though it is unclear as to exactly what the operation intended to correct, it left the nearly 37-year-old mother of four in a less than favourable state, concerning many of those closest to her. In a letter to Verena Clarendon, Tibbie wrote of her strife and Emmie's lack of understanding as to "how one could endure such pain and yet live".⁴⁴⁶ Verena had seen Emmie not weeks before, having spent a considerable time with them during her stay in the city, and had remarked on how well Emmie had been.⁴⁴⁷ However, Tibbie felt some comfort knowing that Emmie was of the opinion that her doctors had done all they could to make her comfortable and that she could now recover peacefully in her own home.⁴⁴⁸ This slight set back kept Emmie from her duties and was most likely the reason she missed the annual congress for the Cape party, marking her first and only absence from a National Party congress in the nearly nine years she served in its executives.

Not two months after her own health troubles, the youngest du Toit child, Jacques, took seriously ill in the first week of October. The young boy had contracted typhoid fever, rendering him bedridden for close to three weeks. For three weeks his family and friends doted on him but it would not get any better for those closest to him. At the age of eight years and ten months, he quietly passed away in their home on the 24th of October 1935.⁴⁴⁹ The weeks that followed could have only felt like a blur to Emmie as her beloved "*Poensie*" left an impossibly large void that would never truly be filled.⁴⁵⁰ Support flooded in for the grieving family with Tibbie and Gladys coming to be with their daughter and sister while she was at her most vulnerable. No parents should ever have to contemplate burying their child much less actually have to do so and Emmie now had to confront the fact that her home would now be a little less cheerful as time wore on without their sweet young man to complete their home.

⁴⁴⁵ ARCA J.F.W. Haak collection PV118, A6, typed manuscript.

⁴⁴⁶ ARCA I.G. Visser collection PV181 2/8/1/1/24, Tibbie Steyn – Verena, 26 August 1935.

⁴⁴⁷ ARCA I.G. Visser collection PV181 2/8/1/1/24, Verena – Tibbie Steyn, 20 June 1935. It is possible that Emmie's years of stomach related health issues had resurfaced after having essentially had the Spanish flu back in 1918 but answers to this question can only theorised. See chapter 1.

⁴⁴⁸ ARCA I.G. Visser collection PV181 2/8/1/1/24, Tibbie Steyn– Verena, 26 August 1935.

⁴⁴⁹ KAB Civil death registrations, Cape Province, Nr. 48274.

⁴⁵⁰ The family affectionately referred to their youngest as *Poensie* and Klein Jacques. Both were used interchangeably.

His funeral would be attended by dozens of classmates, friends from Sunday school, teachers and members from both Emmie and Jacques' families and was held in the Groote Kerk in Cape Town several days after his passing. Ds. F.X. Roome and Dr A.J. van der Merwe presided over the service, with the latter later speaking at the gravesite at Woltemade after the proceedings at the church.⁴⁵¹ In a final touching tribute to the young soul, several wreaths were laid with him while several more bore the cards denoting the donations made in his name to the Medical Association of South Africa.⁴⁵² For the third time in her still relatively young life, Emmie had been forced to say goodbye to one of the centre most points of her universe with the world, or God, having cruelly taken away one of the true loves of her life far too soon. The loss would plague Emmie for the foreseeable, keeping her away from her work with the party for close to a year, instead focusing on supporting her family through an incomprehensible period of grieving.⁴⁵³ Her close circle of friends rallied to support them as best they could, with many only being able to offer their condolences through the hundreds of letters and telegrams that came to their home from all corners of the globe.⁴⁵⁴

Shortly before the one-year anniversary of Jacques' passing, Emmie made the trip to Worcester for the 21st sitting of the congress for the Cape National Party. As had become almost customary, she was elected to the *Hoofbestuur* and was nominated as a candidate to stand for vice-chairperson of the party in a vote against Mrs George Hofmeyr. In a rather bold move, Emmie withdrew her nomination and stepped away from the vote entirely, instead motioning that Mrs Hofmeyr should run for the post uncontested.⁴⁵⁵ A unanimous vote for the sole candidate went forward, followed by Emmie's re-election to the Federal Council for the fourth year running, with a *primarii* title to boot.⁴⁵⁶ One might question why she would relinquish an opportunity such as this but the reality may point more to her inevitable focus on her family

⁴⁵¹ Scrapbook, Pierre de Vos private collection, Cape Town.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.* Jacques Sr. was the treasurer of the Medical Association at this time with the same tradition of donating in his name continuing after his own passing in 1958.

⁴⁵³ ARCA I.G. Visser collection PV181 2/8/1/1/23. Verena Clarendon wrote to Tibbie in July of 1936 that she was concerned for Emmie as she was still reeling in the loss more than six months later. She comments that Emmie had been feeling better than when they had last spoke but would need more than a few months to truly come to terms with the loss.

⁴⁵⁴ KAB A969 Box 5. Condolences were sent from friends all across the world and South Africa. These included messages from an American diplomat by the name of Garrett Ackerson and his wife, Oom John Roberts and Jo Osborn, a friend of Roberts and longtime correspondent with both Jacques and Emmie.

⁴⁵⁵ KAB A969 Box 14, "Die Nasionale Party van die Kaapprovinsie: Notule van die een-en-twinstigste Kongres, Worcester, 30 September 1936.

⁴⁵⁶ Members of the council were made either *primarii* or *sekundi* leaders with the differentiation not necessarily relating to voting power or rights but rather that *sekundi* could stand in for *primarii* members if needed. Emmie served as both during her numerous terms on the council.

and wanting her work to interfere with their lives as little as possible without fear of over commitment and stretching herself too far. Overextension was not uncommon however and she would have several bouts of illness that prevented her from participating in party activities and generally continuing with her life. While her family took centre stage in terms of where her attention would be directed with the party following a close second, Emmie's social activities may have waned somewhat but they certainly had not ceased to exist.

As early as January of 1936, a surprising figure was added to the ever-growing list of friends whose letters graced her desk; those of Sir Abe Bailey, the diamond mining magnate who had been a close friend of Cecil John Rhodes in the Transvaal as well as his neighbour in Muizenberg. At the first signs of their correspondence, Bailey was already in his early 70s and was preparing to undergo an intensive surgery to amputate one of his legs with a second amputation following in 1938.⁴⁵⁷ In spite of his health issues, he remained remarkably enthusiastic in their discussions and maintained a distinctive nostalgic undertone in his correspondence with her. Bailey had known her father and had only high praise for the statesman and the limited interactions he had enjoyed before Steyn's death in 1916 and had also come to know Colin through his political connections.⁴⁵⁸ Emmie, Jacques and their children were frequent guests to the *Rust-en-Vrede* estate that hugged the Muizenberg shoreline with Bailey hosting large parties for the same circle of Cape socialites, politicians and dignitaries that Emmie often had in her own home.⁴⁵⁹ Bailey also acted as an agent and go between for Emmie who had begun investing in shares in mining exploration companies in the Transvaal which would have been one source of the substantial wealth Emmie and Jacques accumulated and eventually left to their children.⁴⁶⁰

Much of their discussions on paper were politically inclined with Bailey showing a particular interest in the activities of the nationalists and Emmie's role therein.⁴⁶¹ Bailey bore witness to Emmie's political outpourings in her letters to him, despite the fact that he was not necessarily in agreement with her sentiments. He often politely called her letters "interesting and

⁴⁵⁷ *The African World*, thought piece by Sir Abe Bailey, 17 July 1937, n.p; *The Times* (London), "Leaving for England", 14 May 1938, n.p.

⁴⁵⁸ KAB A969 Box 13, Bailey – Emmie, 3 January 1936. In this letter, Bailey also expressed his condolences for the death of Klein Jacques as well his sympathies for the seemingly never-ending plight of illnesses Emmie had been fighting.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁰ KAB A969 Box 13, Bailey – Emmie, 8 April 1937.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*

instructive” but punctuated with quintessential British diplomacy: “I will not allow my friendship for anyone to be withheld by politics”.⁴⁶² Bailey appears to have been a sound source for advice and quick witted remarks, with his expertise in economics and intimate understanding of politics being relayed to Emmie regularly. The two differed on their brands of republicanism in South Africa with Bailey possessing a more restrained belief in the prospect while understanding the benefits that stemmed from being under monarchical rule.⁴⁶³ He was not shy in his consideration of Emmie’s standpoint on the matter: “If you are not a republican before you are 21, you have no heart. If you are one after 21, you have no head...our interests should lie in sticking together”.⁴⁶⁴ Emmie’s exact words that brought on this reply can only be speculated as Bailey destroyed the letter in question at Emmie’s request but not before he could formulate his responses to it.⁴⁶⁵ Their relationship would continue in this form right up until Bailey’s final departure for England where he would die in 1940 with Emmie often seeking his thoughts on the matters she found herself involved in.⁴⁶⁶

Beyond her socialisation with Bailey and his associates, Emmie’s work with the party warranted her attention and preparations for the congress of 1937 had been well underway in the months preceding it. Before that however, the Federal Council had their annual conference in mid-May in Pretoria, where they clarified the points that would be brought to order at the Uitenhage congress in August. The Council meeting did not attract as much drama as what had been experienced in the years prior to it with much of the attention focused on the fiscal matters and the drafting of a pamphlet on the republican issue.⁴⁶⁷ It was also decided that the official colour of the party would be “*Oranje*”, the distinctive shade of orange that has come to be associated with the nationalists in South Africa.⁴⁶⁸ With these points amongst others clarified, the group would reconvene at the Congress in the third week of August in the Eastern Cape town of Uitenhage. The three-day event would also mark the formal opening and first

⁴⁶² KAB A969 Box 13, Bailey – Emmie, 3 February 1937.

⁴⁶³ *The African World* (London), “Sir Abe Bailey replies to Mr Eric Louw”, 28 January 1939, n.p. This standpoint would only be noted two years after Bailey’s initial letter to Emmie regarding republicanism in 1937 but the sentiments remained.

⁴⁶⁴ KAB A969 Box 13, Bailey – Emmie, 3 February 1937.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Almost no correspondence attributed to Bailey is known to exist as he requested that his letters be burnt after reading. The same applies to letters in his possession, almost all of which were destroyed as per his final will and testament. See J.R.A Bailey, *My Dear Old Abe: letters to Sir Abe Bailey, 1940*, Laseria, 1990 for the only surviving letters from his personal collection.

⁴⁶⁶ It would be Bailey that said that Emmie may have fared better in the world had she been born a man later punctuating it with the fact that she now had an opportunity to make the best of her situation given her abilities and willingness to involve herself in all things political. KAB A969 Box 13, Bailey – Emmie, 15 March 1939.

⁴⁶⁷ ARCA Federal Council collection PV54 2/5, Federal Council minutes, 21 May 1937.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

publication of the latest addition to the bevy of *Nasionale Pers* mouthpieces, *Die Oosterlig*, intended to reach viewers in the eastern regions of the Cape Province.⁴⁶⁹

Close to 170 delegates arrived for the congress where the opening remarks included estimating the party's reach to include some 35 000 supporters with more support expected to be found in the coming months.⁴⁷⁰ Malan and other speakers also noted the accusations being directed at the party for its supposed admiration for fascism, a perception that they were remarkably quick to deny, instead claiming that the party was actually the last remaining advocate for democracy in South Africa.⁴⁷¹ Later that afternoon, the topic of Jewish immigration came to the fore and the responses from the caucus were vitriolic with rampant anti-Semitism and bigotry being espoused by several individuals. The influx of European Jews fleeing the fascist Nazi regime earlier in the decade had already seen resistance but the perceived threat of communism that the nationalists claimed the Jews brought with them only spurred on the argument for not allowing them passage to South Africa.⁴⁷² Eric Louw, also made this very clear in an address to the party in which he blatantly called Jewish immigrants "pests" that threatened to spread communism and thwart the work being done by the party.⁴⁷³ While the National Party did not ever directly affiliate themselves with Hitler or the actual Nazi party, their sentiments had smatterings of the rhetoric that had been directed towards those of the Jewish faith for many decades. This would also not be the last time Emmie or the party would be affiliated with such views with the former taking a stance so extreme nearly four years later that would surprise many closest to her.

The congress had once again followed its familiar pattern with Emmie remaining on the *Hoofbestuur* and the Federal Council to see another term through. Before leaving Uitenhage, Emmie gave one last word to *Die Oosterlig* for its maiden issue: "*Aanhou, Moedhou, Wen! Welkom, hartlik welkom Oosterlig! Mag u in krag so toeneem dat u lig die donkerste hoekies bestraal en verlig met die lig van Nasionalisme.*" [Keep going, keep (a good) heart, win! A warm welcome to the Oosterlig! May you grow in power so that your light radiates and

⁴⁶⁹ *Die Oosterlig*, "Nasionale Party-kongres op Uitenhage", 20 August 1937, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.* Louw was a lawyer, diplomat and politician, serving as High Commissioner in London and later as Minister of Foreign Affairs under Hendrik Verwoerd. He, alongside many others, was a staunch NP man and part of the nationalist "inner circle".

illuminates the darkest corners with the light of Nationalism].⁴⁷⁴ Before the proverbial light could begin to spread, Emmie had matters of the home and private life to return to in Cape Town. While they had been at the congress in Uitenhage, Malan had formalised his relationship with one Maria Louw, a young nationalist from Calvinia who had served alongside Emmie and Malan on the *Hoofbestuur* for a number of years.⁴⁷⁵ Their relationship had been a complete secret from all closest to them with even the notoriously nosy Emmie who lived several houses down from Malan and his sons being none the wiser. When the news of their proposed wedding broke two weeks earlier than planned, Emmie was reportedly the first person Maria received a call from to ask if the news was true.⁴⁷⁶ The younger woman was mortified to know that news had broken before they could surprise their friends but the damage had already been done.

Whether Emmie phoned out of genuine happiness for her friend Malan is doubtful given that she was less than complimentary about his new wife with the two appearing to have a difficult relationship.⁴⁷⁷ Genuine intentions or not, Emmie and Jacques would not be in attendance for their nuptials that took place two months after the disastrous phone call. Instead, the couple took their three children on an extended holiday to Europe in the early weeks of December 1937. Setting off from the docks in the Cape Town harbour aboard the *Stirling Castle*, the family planned to be away for close to three months, a substantial and deserved break given the gravity of the events in the 18 months prior.⁴⁷⁸ Their three girls would accompany them on this trip, themselves at three different stages of their lives. Ileana, their youngest was enrolled at *Bloemhof Meisieskool* in Stellenbosch and had just turned 13 with Nerina, their middle and somewhat more eccentric child, having just completed her end of year examinations at *La Rochelle* in Paarl, the same school that her eldest sister had attended.⁴⁷⁹ Said eldest sister Iona, was a remarkably promising first year student at the University of Cape Town who had finished school a year early and was pursuing a Bachelor of Commerce degree.⁴⁸⁰

The plan was to spend their time in Europe visiting the numerous friends that they had seen on their 1926 trip, followed by time in the French and Italian Alps so that the girls could partake

⁴⁷⁴ *Die Oosterlig*, “Nasionale Party-kongres op Uitenhage”, 20 August 1937, p. 7. This ‘light’ of nationalism would burn bright over the coming years, no more so than when the party began preparing for the following years centenary celebration of the *ossewa* [ox wagon] trek into the interior and the fanfare that would surround it.

⁴⁷⁵ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp. 314-315.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁴⁷⁷ OB transcript, p. 11.

⁴⁷⁸ *Die Burger*, “Gister Vertrek”, December 1937, n.p.

⁴⁷⁹ Interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

in winter sports.⁴⁸¹ A visit and stay with their old friend John Roberts was also on the cards with an intention to actually have him return with them and visit the country that he had loved so passionately for the first time.⁴⁸² Naturally, the opera season would also be in full swing during their visit and plans were already underway in terms of deciding what shows they would attend. Starting in London, the group would travel to Paris, Versailles, Brussels, Budapest, Berlin, Amsterdam, Vienna, Basel, Prague, Venice and Florence before leaving to come to South Africa, no doubt thoroughly spent. Their itinerary was documented through photographs rather than letters as had been the case on Emmie and Jacques' previous trip, meaning that the ins and outs of their time abroad are known only to those present and to those who were regaled with the tales upon their return. The trip would calm an often-overcrowded mind and Emmie returned to South Africa in February renewed and ready to face the next set of challenges the world was willing to send her way.

⁴⁸¹ *Die Burger*, "Gister Vertrek", December 1937, n.p.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

Chapter Four – Geagte Generale – 1938-1948

“*Die vrou wat so baie sterk gepraat het..*” [the woman who spoke so strongly]⁴⁸³

The final chapter of this thesis covers the highpoints of the meteoric rise of the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB), its tumultuous relationship with the National Party and Emmie’s role in all of the above. As an executive member of both organisations, Emmie was privy to the internal struggles that saw the attempted reigning in and control of the OB by the NP and the turn to extremist tactics during the Second World War that she refused to participate in. Emmie’s relationships would be tested and she would go on to push the boundaries of what had been expected of a woman of her calibre and background. Finally, this period also marked Emmie’s last stand as an active participant in the political structures that she had devoted her life to.

The decade that followed 1938 stands out as some of the most bizarre and tumultuous periods in Emmie’s life with her friendships and relationships tested beyond what they had ever been before. The year started on a high with the family ringing in the occasion while still on holiday in Europe. They would only arrive back in South Africa in the February, right in time for Emmie to join the immense effort to drum up support ahead of the elections that were scheduled to take place in June. As a member of her councils, she would have been intimately involved in the decision-making processes that were taking place behind the scenes while maintaining her usual place in the social scene. The lead up to the election was marred by nefarious tactics on all sides of the spectrum that delved into the personal lives of party members in a bid to discredit them and if it was serious enough, the party too.⁴⁸⁴ Emmie kept a small notebook on her person during this time, one of the only occasions she appears to have done so, in which she took notes on the arguments and accusations being made in the newspapers as well as points of discussion that were touched on while she toured the province visiting local branches ahead of the election.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸³ OB transcript, p. 4.

⁴⁸⁴ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, footnote 120, p. 322.

⁴⁸⁵ KAB A969 Box 19, personal notebook titled “*Eleksie* [election] 1938. These notes are remarkably difficult to decipher and have almost no context with which to work but they do give an idea of where Emmie travelled over the course of nearly two years.

Support for the NP would be hard earned but the party remained confident it could muster enough support to effectively challenge Smuts and Hertzog's United Party (UP).⁴⁸⁶ The reality would end up being remarkably different but the sustained campaigning would have a lasting impact in the minds of Afrikaners looking for leadership and representation. When it came down to the vote, the UP emerged victorious with the NP winning only 27 seats for their efforts.⁴⁸⁷ Almost all of their support had come from outside of urban regions with their targeted rhetoric being particularly popular with poor white farmers and labourers who had remained in the countryside.⁴⁸⁸ It was not enough to be considered a true threat to the Hertzog-Smuts machine just yet but an impact had been made that would pay off in the longer run. Shortly after the results of the election were released, planning for a special Union congress began, a decision taken by the Federal Council at a meeting in Cape Town on the 6th of August. The congress would also play host to the annual congress for all three provincial parties and would be hosted in Bloemfontein. The intention behind the decision was to encourage the adoption of a unified front as the National Party and by having all three cohorts together, it was hoped that a day of joint proceedings beforehand would spur on the cohesion the party so desperately sought.⁴⁹⁰ The points of order were clarified beforehand and drafted into a pamphlet that would be handed out at the convening of the parties in the second week of November.⁴⁹¹

Amongst the planning that was underway for the congress and the other social, cultural and political happenings she busied herself with, Emmie found time to arrange a coming of age or debutantes ball for her two eldest daughters. By this stage Iona was in her second year at the University of Cape Town while Nerina was nearing the end of her matric year. Kelvin Grove played host to the dinner dance party in the same way it had done for nearly two decades worth of joint celebrations for Tibbie and Jacques.⁴⁹² Fifty of their school and university friends came together alongside family and friends of Emmie and Jacques to pay tribute to their girls and celebrate their looming independence and young adulthood.⁴⁹³ It also happened to coincide with Nerina's 17th birthday and was reported as being a party that no young person in

⁴⁸⁶ The two formally merged their parties in 1934 and were reconstituted as the United Party. Hertzog remained as the Prime Minister with Smuts as his deputy.

⁴⁸⁷ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp. 322-323.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁰ ARCA National Party Federal Council collection PV54, 2/5, Federal Council minutes, 6 August 1938.

⁴⁹¹ KAB A969, Agenda: "Die Nasionale Party Spesiale Uniale Kongress op Bloemfontein, 8-9 November 1938".

⁴⁹² *Die Burger*, "Jongmense Vier Fees op Kelvin Grove", 10 September 1938, n.p.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

attendance would forget for a long time to come.⁴⁹⁵ The night was spent eating, drinking and dancing to the trendiest dance moves, the “Lambeth Walk and Palais Glide” with some partygoers mastering the moves easier than others.⁴⁹⁶ The evening had been an introduction of the girls to the younger Cape social scene, a somewhat different space than the one their mother commanded, but was still one in which the girls could hold their own amongst their peers. Short of theorising, the event may have also served a third purpose outside of introductions and celebrations for the two young women.

Emmie was notorious for her quick tongue and overly keen ear with a particular penchant for gossip and involving herself in the business of others, so much so that her own daughters would not be immune to her intentions. The aforementioned party may have also served as a means for Emmie to play matchmaker and introduce her girls to men that she deemed good enough to even vaguely consider pursuing her children.⁴⁹⁷ All of her daughters were well aware of their mother’s habit for being a busybody in the lives of those around her, knowing that she would find a way to involve herself in this particular aspect of their lives. Emmie maintained several “older” and potentially outdated views on romantic relationships that governed how she thought relationships should be pursued but her messing about in her children’s personal lives may have had more to do with control than anything else.⁴⁹⁸ She had always expected and been given the best in life through her genuinely loving and committed relationship with Jacques and under the guise of wanting the same for her girls, she ended up involving herself to the point that all three children would come to resent her for later in their lives.⁴⁹⁹ Though no life altering match making was done that particular evening, it would certainly not be the last time Emmie involved herself in the matters of the heart, especially if it belonged to someone else.

She continued her work in the party while also turning her attention to the upcoming centenary trek and surrounding celebrations set to take place over the coming months. The centenary trek aimed to emulate the routes that several of the original Voortrekkers had taken upon their journeys into the interior in search of better futures in the 1830s as well as commemorate the victory of the Afrikaners over the Zulu at the Battle of Blood River in 1838. Nine ox wagons accompanied by men, women and children, dressed in traditional Voortrekker costumes to

⁴⁹⁵ *Die Burger*, “Jongmense Vier Fees op Kelvin Grove”, 10 September 1938, n.p.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁷ Interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*



Figure 9: (L-R) Nerina du Toit, Emmie and Tibbie Steyn at an ossewatrek celebration in Bloemfontein, 1938.

garner attention and enthusiasm for the event, travelled from Cape Town and travelled on to Pretoria and to Blood River (now Ncome) in Natal.⁵⁰⁰ In a feverish festival of sorts, hundreds of people gathered in towns along the route often dressed in their own costumes to wave the group on their way.⁵⁰¹ As a member of the Voortrekkers, the Afrikaner answer to the predominantly English Boy and Girl Scouts movement, Emmie had long worked with the group even serving as a regional leader in the 1920s and 30s before turning her attention to the party.⁵⁰² The group had its roots in the early years of formalised nationalism (1913) but was only officially established in 1931, with its first leader being none other than Nico van der Merwe.⁵⁰³

With her brother-in-law leading them, it was inevitable that Emmie would be a member, having her children signed up as members alongside her. Tibbie Steyn was also taken by the group and as would be expected of the former First Lady of the Free State, she participated in several of the events that took place over a number of months.⁵⁰⁴ Further to the familial relations, the Voortrekkers prided themselves on following ten principles that were meant to govern how they carried themselves and treated others. This included but were not limited to keeping the language and culture of the Afrikaners honourably and practising a true Christian lifestyle that honoured God and enhanced the *volk*. The organisation would be heavily involved in the

⁵⁰⁰ The 1838 victory was seen as an intervention from God for the benefit of the *volk* to live as his chosen people in South Africa and was therefore mythologized as such, E. Cloete: "Afrikaner Identity: Culture, Tradition and Gender", *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity*, (13)(1992), pp. 43-45.

⁵⁰¹ The term "feverish" is used in A. Grundlingh's "From feverish festival to repetitive ritual? The changing fortunes of Great Trek mythology in an industrialising South Africa, 1938-1988", *South African Historical Journal*, (22), 1989.

⁵⁰² *Die Huisgenoot*, "Emmie du Toit glo aan 'n 'teetafel'", , 17 October 1969, p. 78. Not much is known about her full involvement with the Voortrekkers in what was already a remarkably busy period.

⁵⁰³ OB transcript, p. 30.

⁵⁰⁴ *Die Volksblad*, 10 October 1938, n.p.

planning and execution of the centenary trek which was deemed a resounding success in the eyes of the nationalists. Emmie made the trip into the interior, albeit not with the wagons themselves, and would accompany her mother when the party stopped in Bloemfontein for a showing of flag waving and torch bearing. Both would attend several more events during the stop over while Emmie extended her stay in the Free State so as to minimise travelling between the Cape and her former home for the sake of the congress.⁵⁰⁵

The day before the proceedings of the joint congress that would then be followed by the provincial meetings, the Federal Council held their second meeting for the year. It would not be an extensive one but would finalise the plans ahead of the following day's proceedings.⁵⁰⁶ This included the formal adoption of the dark blue *kruithoring* [powderhorn] as the symbol of the party as a means to symbolise the calling together of Afrikaners for their party and *volk*.⁵⁰⁷ One of the most important points of order was what Malan would be proposing to the party in terms of their stance on the looming threat of war in Europe and the involvement of South Africa therein. Neutrality would be the chosen stance and with a unanimous vote in favour of the motion, the four editors of the nationalist mouth pieces were instructed to relay the information as such.⁵⁰⁹ On the first day of the union congress, Federal Council members took turns presenting the eight points of attention to the caucus with Emmie covering "Economic Segregation and Loans" alongside Karl Bremer, then the chairperson of the Cape Party.⁵¹⁰ Others presented on what had become the main focus of the congress and its proceedings, the formalising of segregation of white and non-whites politically, socially and economically for the sake of retaining the purity of the white races.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁵ Tibbie for one participated in the christening of one of the oxwagons at the *Vrouemonument*, aptly naming it 'Mother and Child' (C. Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag*, p. 276). She would not attend many events during the period and was not present during the laying of the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria (interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019).

⁵⁰⁶ ARCA National Party Federal Council collection PV54, 2/5, Federal Council minutes, 7 November 1938. The same symbol was used in the insignia for the Voortrekkers, was affiliated with Afrikaner heritage and history as well as used as the name for the nationalist bi-weekly propaganda medium that was widely distributed during the 1940s and 50s.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ KAB A969 Box 14, Agenda: "Die Nasionale Party Spesiale Uniale Kongress op Bloemfontein, 8-9 November 1938". This included workplaces and places of habitation. It is worth noting that white races denoted the inclusion of English-speakers, an inclusion meant to bolster support from the one time 'enemy'. An intentional effort had been made in the previous year to clarify the stance of the party on non-Afrikaans speaking whites and the fact that they would be welcomed into the party despite not being native Afrikaans speakers if they adhered to the values the party stood for. See *Die Oosterlig*, "Nasionale Party-kongres op Uitenhage", 20 August 1937, n.p.

⁵¹¹ KAB A969 Box 14, Agenda: "Die Nasionale Party Spesiale Uniale Kongress op Bloemfontein, 8-9 November 1938".

With the union congress completed, the provincial congresses took place in the days that followed. On the very first day of the Cape's proceedings, the standard elections for the *Hoofbestuur* and Federal Council took place. Not only was her position on the council retained but her role on the executive was taken a step further. Emmie was once again nominated to stand for the role of vice-chairperson but contrary to the events of the previous year, she did not oppose the offer and was unanimously voted in, replacing Mrs George Hofmeyr and occupying one of the top four positions in the entire Cape party.⁵¹³ After a resounding success and two wins for seats in the party executive, Emmie delivered the closing speech that was deemed "short but powerful" before the national anthem and a prayer officially ended the congress.⁵¹⁴ She would return to the Cape a happy woman with a renewed sense of duty and passion for her new but not totally unfamiliar job.

While the parties had been discussing semantics and details in Bloemfontein, the *Nasionale Pers* was experiencing a series of changes and disruptions in its highest rungs. The organisation managed the production and publication of the mouthpieces for the party through its provincial newspapers, namely *Die Burger*, *Die Transvaler*, *Die Volksblad* and *Die Oosterlig*.⁵¹⁵ The management of the *pers*, as it was colloquially known, overlapped with that of the party with several high-ranking party men occupying prominent positions in both. Much like the party, its power base lay in the Cape and therefore in the hands of Malanites. Shortly after the election that year, Jacques was elected to the directorship of the board, bringing with him years of experience in management in a number of capacities.⁵¹⁶ One of his first self-appointed tasks was an attempt to have more cohesion and unity between the four editors of the newspapers as well as the respective party leaders with whom they may have been expected to work.⁵¹⁷ This echoed the sentiments of the party and in other terms, Emmie's approach to politics and the

⁵¹³ Malan was re-elected as their leader with Karl Bremer and Frans Erasmus as chairperson and secretary respectively.

⁵¹⁴ KAB A969 Box 14, Agenda: "Die Nasionale Party Spesiale Uniale Kongress op Bloemfontein, 8-9 November 1938".

⁵¹⁵ They also published books, pamphlets and other informational and propaganda material.

⁵¹⁶ These capacities included directorship at the *Nasionale Pers*, curatorship of the Jan Marais fund, management of the *Volkshospitaal* in Cape Town and serving on the council for the University of Cape Town (*Die Burger*, "Treffende begrafnis vir Dr J.S. du Toit", 7 August 1958, p. 3). For a detailed history of the *Helpmekaar* fund see A. Ehlers: *Die Kaapse Helpmekaar, c. 1916 – c. 2014. Bemiddelaar in Afrikaner opheffing, selfrespek en respektabiliteit*, 2019.

⁵¹⁷ C.F.J. Muller: *Sonop in die Suide: Geboorte en groei van die Nasionale Pers, 1915-1948*, p. 669.

opinions and emotions that came with it, unity could produce more results than what divisive tactics would.⁵¹⁸

Division had always plagued the nationalists with a general lack of cohesion for the true aims and plans for the future of the *volk* and broader South Africa. There were different forms and degrees of nationalism that were espoused at will with varying degrees of success. Some favoured a ‘milder’ form of nationalism that did not entirely alienate South Africa from its monarchical connections, while others were staunch republicans who would stop at nothing to have the independence the former Boer republics had enjoyed in the previous century.⁵¹⁹ Some tread the line between the two while appreciating what each had to offer while others went to the absolute extreme end of the nationalist spectrum denouncing any alternatives in the process. In Emmie’s case, she embodied all four of the above at different points in her life, while maintaining a steady focus on the republican aspect in particular. The party, for all of its efforts, had not always been able to maintain the same focus on the ideal that Emmie had which would in turn contribute to her very public split from the party and Malan less than three years later.

In the wake of the centenary celebrations, an organisation was founded that would come to embody a very specific brand of republicanism and nationalism with a substantial smattering of fascism to boot. The OB was established as an Afrikaner cultural organisation that aimed to continue the work that the centenary had set in motion at the end of 1938.⁵²⁰ The group was governed by ethnic and cultural nationalism that saw members grouped into pseudo-militaristic commandos with minimal formal organisation by means of a constitution or a set of principles and aims in its earliest stages.⁵²¹ With an explicitly apolitical tone to their rhetoric, the group gained popularity relatively quickly warranting a formalisation of structures and plans for the future. Emmie was well aware of the OB from its inception but did not join its ranks after its formal establishment in February 1939 instead keeping her focus on the party and the looming storm that was the outbreak of the Second World War. The overlaps between the OB and the NP would be a great source of consternation in the coming years with Emmie once again finding herself at the epicentre of the issue.

⁵¹⁸ This elusive unity is naturally exclusive in its conditions referring specifically to white South Africans and more to the point, those identifying as Afrikaners, not South Africans as a collective.

⁵¹⁹ The former refers to pockets of Cape nationalists while the latter was associated with nationalists in the Transvaal and Free State.

⁵²⁰ *Ossewabrandwag* translates to Oxwagon Sentinel and was initially led by Col. J.C.C. Laas.

⁵²¹ C. Marx: *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag*, p. 303.

For much of 1939, the focus of the party lay in maintaining their stance of neutrality towards the notion of South Africa joining in the inevitable war that had been brewing in Europe for a number of months. Smuts had other plans and was willing to have South Africa participate in the war but did not have the full support of his leader, Hertzog with the two having “agreed to disagree” on the matter when they believed war would not actually become a reality.⁵²² When it came down to it, Malan knew that Hertzog intended to claim neutrality but was also at the mercy of the party he had so gallantly lead after their split.⁵²³ With the backing of the party who had convened in Cape Town, Malan made the decision to write to Hertzog, offering their support for him should he adopt their stance.⁵²⁴ As a member of the executive, Emmie had been part and parcel of the NP’s decision-making process on neutrality and its declaration at the Bloemfontein congress not six months prior, also forming part of the caucus who had decided to extend their hand to Hertzog. News of the suggestion to reconcile would have come as a relief to some, not least Tibbie Steyn who had felt her relationship with her old friend and confidant Hertzog had suffered considerably after Emmie’s very public criticism and split from him.⁵²⁵

The executives who had extended their hand to Hertzog were well aware of the implications it would have on his position in the UP and his role as Prime Minister but continued their efforts to have him follow their suit.⁵²⁶ Hertzog received their representatives and the letters they bore without issue but informed them that a decision had already been made with plans for implementation well underway. It was initially believed that their offer had been in vain with Hertzog agreeing to declare war but this was later refuted when it was revealed that he had in fact pushed for neutrality but was refused by Smuts and a substantial number of cabinet ministers.⁵²⁷ The fight made its way to parliament where Hertzog put his motion of neutrality forward in what would become an altogether unsightly scene and result in an embarrassing loss for the Prime Minister that prompted a request to the Governor-General for the dissolution of Parliament and the calling of a general election.⁵²⁸

⁵²² L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 329.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁵ E. Truter: “Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 226. Tibbie had been desperately hoping for some sort of reconciliation between Hertzog and Emmie and saw this opportunity as a starting point for it.

⁵²⁶ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp. 329-330.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

⁵²⁸ F.A. van Jaarsveld: *From van Riebeeck to Vorster 1652-1974: an introduction to the History of the Republic of South Africa*, p. 246.

Neither request would be granted and Hertzog officially resigned on the 5th of September with Smuts stepping into the position and the NP welcoming Hertzog back with relatively open arms at yet another meeting to discuss his return to the party with a small number of supporters who had followed his lead.⁵²⁹ Over the days that followed, Emmie had an opportunity to finally make peace with her old friend with the events of the years prior being seen as water under the bridge.⁵³⁰ Tibbie could not have been more elated for them and was eternally optimistic that they had put it all behind them and hoped to have their relationships return to some semblance of their former glory.⁵³¹

With Hertzog back in the nationalist camp, the UP's declaration in support of the war against Nazi Germany did not sit well with many South Africans, with many Afrikaners feeling that the decision displayed a blatant support for British imperialism and opened old wounds and feelings towards the British and their efforts in South Africa not 50 years prior.⁵³² Many simply did not see why South Africa would need to enter a war that was not their own and risk losing lives for the sake of another's battle. The declaration of war followed by the subsequent breakdown of the fusion government and reconstituting of Hertzog's breakaway group into the NP would require a concerted effort to develop some semblance of unity amongst Afrikaners. This sentiment was articulated by and encouraged within the OB who positioned themselves as champions of the *volk* and who openly opposed the war and attempted to encourage *volkseenheid* and actively pursue the republican ideal, all of which they felt had their foundations in what constituted Afrikaner culture.⁵³³ It was also hoped that after nearly six years of instability and faltering loyalties, *hereniging* [reunification] would take place in the ranks of the OB through the shared belief in the tenants set out above.⁵³⁴ The group quickly

⁵²⁹ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 330. Not all in the NP camp were happy to see the return of Hertzog after several years of ill-tempered back and forth, C.R. Swart being one of the more vocal opponents. Nico van der Merwe however was far more enthusiastic for him to return to their fold. See pp. 333-334.

⁵³⁰ ARCA Audio collection K710/D4/1, interview with E.J. du Toit, 15 October 1981.

⁵³¹ E. Truter: "Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, p. 226.

⁵³² Some Afrikaners saw the German people as a sort of "relative" with whom they shared some aspects of heritage and culture making the declaration an attack too close to their own sentiments.

⁵³³ C. Marx: "The *Ossewabrandwag* as a mass movement, 1939-1941", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, (20) (2) (2004), p. 196. These ideals were hallmarks of cultural nationalism and overt political radicalisation as opposed to constitutional nationalism that would have attempted to affect actual policy and action within the state.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

gained momentum and saw an extensive growth in membership figures, though exact numbers could seemingly never be decided upon.⁵³⁵

Up until this point, the OB had articulated sentiments specific to the South African context with a targeted approach on those identifying as Afrikaners. Its initial ideologies had not been intrinsically linked to fascism or the Nazi regime that was embattled in a war they were responsible for instigating. In fact, the OB's iterations had been surprisingly vague in terms of the actual, tangible goals the organisation hoped to achieve and relied mainly on generally held cultural evaluations of what constituted being an Afrikaner.⁵³⁶ This in turn meant that the OB could position itself in line with and adapt to what it felt the *volk* needed at any given time without the limitations of a rigid constitution and plan of action.⁵³⁷ The affiliation with the aforementioned came only in 1941 when the OB acquired a new leader in the form of J.F.J. van Rensburg, better known as Hans, a lawyer and sitting administrator of the Free State.⁵³⁸

The solicitor had served as the Secretary for Justice after a meteoric rise through the ranks of the administrative and judicial systems which may have been much to do with his close relationship with Tielman Roos after having served the politician as his private secretary in the 1920s.⁵³⁹ After resigning as administrator in 1941, Van Rensburg stepped into the highest leadership position the OB offered, taking command of an organisation that had initially grown in membership and support but had waned in recent years as the feverish sentiments of the centenary wore off. He was seen as a charismatic and emphatic leader in person but was one who, by Emmie's own account, possessed terrible public speaking skills that detracted from his impassioned attempts at rousing his troops.⁵⁴⁰

Van Rensburg brought with him a particular vision for the *volk*, one that included heavy Nationalist Socialist tones after having visited Nazi Germany and meeting with Hitler in 1936,

⁵³⁵ Membership figures were often exaggerated in official documentation and newspaper reports and ranged from the tens to the hundreds of thousands. See p. 328 of C. Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag*.

⁵³⁶ C. Marx: "The Ossewabrandwag as a mass movement, 1939-1941", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, (20) (2) (2004), p. 204.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ This was roughly the same time that Colin Steyn was being bounced around between his family members and being financially supported by Roos in the process.

⁵⁴⁰ OB transcript, p. 9.

being wholly impressed by his leadership and ability to command discipline.⁵⁴¹ The latter was something Van Rensburg felt was lacking in Afrikanerdom and was a problem he thought best to rectify through the militarisation of the OB and its ranks.⁵⁴² He essentially restructured the OB but retained the basic skeleton of the “*Kommando*” structure that had already been adopted in 1939.⁵⁴³ The already established system consisted of locally organised commandos, many of which were in smaller rural towns, where people were likely to already know one another well and see one another as members of a community that constituted a part the *volk* at large.⁵⁴⁴ The system took a simplified form so as to deliberately distinguish itself from an increasingly complicated South African political system that had prided itself on titles and ranks. These structures also initially blurred social differences which meant that older community members could be led by and “ordered around” by far younger and less experienced members they may have deemed as “inferior”.⁵⁴⁶

One of the first points of order for the new *Kommandant Generaal* (KG) was the institution of the very same ranks and titles it had attempted to refrain from adopting in the first place. What resulted was a remarkably complicated hierarchy of *hoofkommandants*, *generaale* and *kommandants* [head commanders, generals and commanders] that managed both the youth and adults’ divisions.⁵⁴⁷ The latter were divided along gendered lines with men and women initially given the same rights before policy was amended at the drafting of a tentative constitution in 1939.⁵⁴⁸ There would be separate divisional commandos for men and women that were ultimately governed by the men’s division who would take charge in the case of combined events with women’s commandos being ultimate subordinate to the overarching *hoofkommandant* for the division.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴¹ C. Marx: *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag*, pp. 389-391. The term commanding discipline is putting it mildly with one duly noting the realities of the Nazi regime and the lasting effects it would have on the world. Marx also explains that there was no doubt to the fact that Van Rensburg was a Nazi who was attempting to mould the nationalist socialist concept to the South African context. See p. 392.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.* This included the rhetoric employed as well as the actual structures of the organization and the titles that accompanied them.

⁵⁴³ C. Marx: “The Ossewabrandwag as a mass movement, 1939-1941”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, (20) (2) (2004), p. 203.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁵⁴⁷ ARCA J.D. Jerling collection PV158, 29-30, Memorandum: “Die Ossewabrandwag Vroue Volksorg”.

⁵⁴⁸ C. Marx: *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag*, p. 339.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.* See footnote 71.

Initially the highest position a woman in the OB could hold was that of *generaal* with the title later being abandoned in its entirety to have women's ranks limited to that of *kommandant*.⁵⁵⁰ Women who had already been granted the title would not have it taken away but were instead grouped as the *vroue adjunkraad* [women's deputy council] that sat as a body under the command of the *Grootraad* (GR) [Grand Council]. All divisions ultimately answered to the KG and the GR that consisted of a number of committee and portfolio leaders as well as each of the provincial leaders.⁵⁵¹ The structure would be amended several times over the course of the OB's existence with each reshuffle resulting in the gradual degradation of women's power and agency in the highest rungs of the organisation.

Having been otherwise occupied with the activities of the NP and the extensive executive decisions that were having to be made at any given time, Emmie had not been caught up in the initial fever pitch of the OB's establishment and subsequent growth, though attempts were made to draw her attention to their cause. While still administrator of the Free State, Van Rensburg had been in contact with Tibbie, showing immense adoration for her role as a *volksmoeder* and widow of the "great President".⁵⁵² After espousing a particularly long sentiment praising her role in Afrikaner history, he wrote of his intentions to visit Emmie on his next visit to the Cape in the coming weeks to exchange pleasantries and attempt to "bring her over to us".⁵⁵³ Van Rensburg was not yet in command at the OB but had already joined the organisation having taken an interest in their apolitical stance and calls to rally as a *volk* and hoped to encourage Emmie to do the same.⁵⁵⁴ His suggestion was rebuffed but it would not be the last attempt to persuade her otherwise.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁰ C. Marx: *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag*, p. 340.

⁵⁵¹ ARCA J.D. Jerling collection PV158, 29-30, Memorandum: "Die Ossewabrandwag Vroue Volksorg".

⁵⁵² ARCA I.G. Visser collection PV 181, 2/8/1/1/24, Hans van Rensburg – Tibbie Steyn, 7 December 1939.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁴ OB transcript, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁵ When she did eventually join, van Rensburg had nothing but praise for her work and described Emmie as "one of most active and loyal women officers in the Cape". Quoted in J.F.J. van Rensburg: *Their paths crossed mine: memoirs of the Commandant-General of the Ossewabrandwag*, p. 188.



Figure 10: The *Hoofgenerale* of the OB. Emmie is seated in the middle of the front row with Mrs C. Meyer to her right. Behind her stand (L-R) Mrs Rautenbach; Mrs Michau and Hettie Steenkamp.

Emmie's own articulations at this point were not misaligned with the vague iterations the OB had been proposing. In mid-1940, Emmie gave an address at a NP gathering in Paarl that turned heads and set tongues wagging. Malan was not in attendance but was stopped a few days later and asked about "*die vrou wat so baie sterk gepraat het oor wat ons houding oor die oorlog se uitbreek en al die dinge moet wees*" [the woman who spoke so strongly about what our attitude towards the outbreak of the war and all those things should be].⁵⁵⁶ Her impassioned approach had sent a very clear message and Malan immediately called his long-time friend concerned with how it would be perceived given her position at the party.⁵⁵⁷ After attending another constituency's meeting shortly afterward, Emmie was outright asked by her comrades to refrain from joining the OB which she took great offense to:

"Niemand sal vir my voorskryf of ek moet aansluit nie. Ek sal self besluit of ek sal aansluit of nie, want vir my is dit 'n beginselkwessie en 'n kwessie nie van iets anders nie as 'Wat bied die OB aan?'" [No one will tell me if I should join. I will decide for

⁵⁵⁶ OB transcript, p. 4.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

myself whether or not to join, because for me it is a matter of principle and not a matter of anything other than 'What does the OB offer?'].⁵⁵⁸

Even after their disparaging attempt to prevent her joining the OB, Emmie claimed that Malan himself later approached her to say that he believed she should in fact join their ranks.⁵⁵⁹ The opposing ends of this recollection create confusion as to why Malan would suddenly ask this of her despite the iterations of other party leaders telling her otherwise. Emmie said she would consider the prospect given that the OB was claiming to be apolitical in its efforts meaning that there would not be a conflict of interest, with the question rather being whether she would be able to fulfil both roles well enough.⁵⁶⁰ In her mind, this was Malan's way of asking her to act as a buffer between the two as a means of encouraging cooperation and forging a working relationship with members of both.⁵⁶¹ The extent to which these were the exact words uttered to her may be debateable given the sheer gravitas of the task but the basic principle of the matter was becoming a matter of interest for Malan.⁵⁶²

The NP was still otherwise occupied in their attempts to reincorporate Hertzog and his cohort back into the party without spilling too much blood in the process. It was proving difficult given the ever-warring sentiments of the regional bodies and their leaders who disagreed on how they would be reconstituted. The issue of Hertzog's disagreement to the tenant of republicanism was a major source of consternation and was one that very nearly brought the entire process to an end.⁵⁶³ He then suggested the establishment of an entirely new party with a new name in contention if an agreement could not be reached, standing firm against Malan's approach that would have them simply join the NP as it stood.⁵⁶⁴ Having reached yet another deadlock, Malan was willing to let a committee coordinate relations between them, having

⁵⁵⁸ OB transcript, p. 4.. One cannot emphasise the realities of the beliefs and practices of the OB more. It must be made clear from the outset that this is a fascist orientated group who bought into the expanding and prevalent ideology of fascism as was seen in the period of the 1920s, 30s and 40s. They not only bought into this but promoted and partook in activities that were abhorrent and emphasised their support for the subjugation of groups and individuals that they deemed as "other". The OB played on already present racial and ethnic beliefs and complexes.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶² Van Rensburg saw her in similar terms and hinted at his satisfaction in knowing that she would have access to the innermost workings of the NP. See J.F.J. van Rensburg: *Their paths crossed mine: memoirs of the Commandant-General of the Ossewabrandwag*, p. 188.

⁵⁶³ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 337. Hertzog and his followers did want to fully commit to the republican ideal instead suggesting that focus be postponed until the war was over.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

picked up on Hertzog's frailty and the effect it was having on his decision making processes.⁵⁶⁵ The republican debate raged on into 1940 and was further complicated by disagreements regarding the new name the party would take on when they were finally reunited. The NP were happy to use the "*Herenigde Nasionale Party*" (Reunified National Party) going forward with the Hertzogites suggesting that the "*Volksparty*" would be more fitting.

At a meeting of the Federal Council in Pretoria on the 15th and 16th of October 1940, the motion reconstituting the parties under the name "*Herenigde Nasionale Party*" was passed by its members, Emmie included but it had not been without cost.⁵⁶⁶ A series of miscommunications saw Hertzog attempting to draft a constitution for a new party that alarmed the Malan camp who were operating under the notion that the Federal Council would be doing so with Hertzog lashing out when he learned of the reality.⁵⁶⁷ Amongst other things, Nico van der Merwe, the leader of the Free State NP and more importantly, Emmie's brother in law, died suddenly in August of 1940. The family were shocked into action and rallied around the younger Tibbie in her time of great sorrow and loss. The family had lost an important cornerstone of their clan and Emmie had lost a close friend and confidant with whom she had found an ally in the political storm she always managed to find herself in. Nico had been a trusted member of Malan's innermost circle and was his go-to figure in the Free State caucus as well as the Federal Council. His passing impacted the events of the Free State congress that would follow October's Federal Council sitting that saw the final defeat of Hertzog when his once thwarted draft constitution was pitted against and defeated by the same motion that had been passed in the Cape earlier in the month.⁵⁶⁸ The loss saw him retire from politics entirely, passing away two years later with Emmie recalling her relief at having patched their relationship up before it was too late.⁵⁶⁹

The dust had only just settled on the 18 months' worth of back and forth in the NP when the OB reared its head once again. Malan's suggestion to act as a go between the groups still weighed on Emmie's mind as he continued to tentatively seek out opportunities for the two

⁵⁶⁵ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 337.

⁵⁶⁶ ARCA National Party Federal Council collection PV54, 2/5, Federal Council minutes, 15-16 October 1940.

⁵⁶⁷ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 342. Hertzog had become increasingly more difficult to work with to the point that meetings with his own members were being held without his knowledge.

⁵⁶⁸ See footnote above & Koorts pp. 345-346. A last-ditch attempt was made by Klasie Havenga, a loyal Hertzogite, to keep the spirit of his attempts alive through the establishment of the Afrikaner Party.

⁵⁶⁹ ARCA Audio collection K710/D4/1, interview with E.J. du Toit 15 October 1981.

groups to work together.⁵⁷⁰ The OB leadership, still under Laas, turned down Malan's offer of an alliance but offered to coordinate their efforts with that of the party. Cautious optimism would need to be employed for no guarantees had been made that the agreement would not be back tracked upon. Suspicions surrounding their promises to refrain from turning violent and antagonistic towards the government proved to be true with party leadership feeling that the OB had to be reined in for the sake of all. The OB had always had prominent nationalists in its own ranks who saw to it that Laas was deposed and temporarily replaced by C.R. Swart, Emmie's long-time friend and Malan loyalist.⁵⁷¹

During this time, the Cradock Agreement was drafted, effectively stopping the OB from pursuing its ideals outside of the constitutional boundaries they were expected to adhere to while also maintaining their apolitical stance and refraining from interfering in party business.⁵⁷² The loose end in the nationalists plan however, was that the agreement had been drafted while under temporary leadership, meaning that it did not bear the name of Van Rensburg who was inaugurated as the new leader of the OB in January 1941. Upon ascension to power, Van Rensburg followed the NP's suit in amending a constitutional clause that did not allow NP officials to simultaneously hold positions in the OB with those in contravention of the amendment having to choose one over the other resulting in a number of high-ranking officials including C.R. Swart resigning from their OB positions.⁵⁷³

While the men of the NP engrossed themselves with strengthening their ranks from the potential threat to power from Van Rensburg, other high-ranking officials from the OB had been quietly approaching Emmie to have her join their fold. On more than one occasion Emmie was visited by J.A. Smith, one of the adjunct leaders who had also been involved at *Die Burger*, who attempted to sway the seasoned party executive in the direction of the OB. Their initial interest in Emmie had been piqued by the speech she had so passionately delivered in Paarl, prompting Jacob de Vos, secretary for the *beheerraad* [control board], to write to her on behalf of Smith to thank her for her words that had essentially endorsed the principles of the OB and encouraged a working relationship between the two groups.⁵⁷⁴ Smith and Emmie had met after

⁵⁷⁰ Malan had noticed that there had been a sharp increase in recruitment to the OB in response to the drive to recruit soldiers for the war. See Koorts, p. 349.

⁵⁷¹ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism* p. 352.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.* The NP *Hooftbestuur* then passed an amendment to its constitution preventing members from belonging to other political parties, deeming it as a conflict of interest.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

⁵⁷⁴ KAB A969 Box 3, De Vos – Emmie, 14 September 1940 & OB transcript p. 4.

the events surrounding the speech and ended up discussing the role of women in the organisation, a tenant brought up by Emmie who had sought clarity on the matter given the mixed messages she felt had been sent out.⁵⁷⁵ It appears that Emmie had every intention of joining the OB by September 1940 given that De Vos enclosed a patch work-esque document clarifying the role of women in the OB that bore her name, already styled as “*Generale mev. (Dr) J.S. du Toit*”.⁵⁷⁶

The document appears to have been a collaborative effort and was essentially the groundwork for the formation of the *vroue adjunkraad* with a follow up letter the next week going on to explain just what her reply had helped to formulate:

“Die Beheerraad het die reeling in verband met die Vroue-Adjunk-Raad gisteraand eenparig goed-gekeur. Ek sal bly wees as u die ander lede vir die Raad wil aanwys, en maar dadelik aan werk gaan volgens die skemas wat u in gedagte het... Wat vroue sake binne die Ossewabrandwag betref, sal u voortaan gevra word om sittings van die Kaaplandse beheerraad by te woon. Ek sal bly wees met die reelings, soos goedgekeur deur die Beheerraad. Mevrouw Greeff sal nader en alles aan haar duidlik maak, en ek verwag stellig dat ook sy hierdie oplossing aanneemlik sal vind, en dat u Raad vrugbare werk ten behoeve van die Ossewabrandwag, waarvan u die Kaaplandse leidster is, sal kan verrig. U alle seen op die werk toewensende” [The Governing Council unanimously approved the arrangements for the Women's Deputy Council last night. I would be delighted if you would like to appoint the other members to the Council, and immediately go to work in accordance with the schemes you have in mind... In the case of women's affairs within the *Ossewabrandwag*, you will henceforth be asked to attend meetings of the Cape control board with arrangements as approved by the Governing Council. Mrs Greeff will approach and make everything clear and I expect that she too will find this solution acceptable, and that your Council will be able to do fruitful work on behalf of the *Ossewabrandwag*, of which you are the leader of the Cape. We hope your work will be blessed.]⁵⁷⁷

At this point, Emmie was still serving on both the Federal Council and *Hoofbestuur* of the NP with the intention of being able to fulfil both of these roles alongside this new OB position that she was due to start in on the 1st of January 1941. In the interim she was asked by Maria Malan to request for Van Rensburg to call at the Malan's Sea Point home that was next door to her own. Malan was aware of the OB's interest in Emmie having already encouraged her to act as their 'bridge' while working for both. Strangely, Emmie refused to arrange this particular meeting stating that because she was not yet a leader in the Cape it would be remiss of her to

⁵⁷⁵ KAB A969 Box 3, De Vos – Emmie, 14 September 1940.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁷ KAB A969 Box 3, J.A. Smith – Emmie, 17 September 1940.

intervene and “manipulate” Van Rensburg into meeting with Malan without the knowledge of the regional leader.⁵⁷⁸ This was a different approach for the notorious intervener but may have stemmed from not wanting to make enemies in the OB before she had even had a chance to properly begin.

It is worth noting that the fact that prominent nationalists, and women in particular, were seeing the OB as the next viable opportunity, says a lot about the state of National Party affairs at the time. Women were initially allowed to enter these NP spaces with men post amalgamation but the general phasing out of their involvement seen in their lack of representation on the governing bodies, says much about their trajectory. The OB articulated a highly curated sense of identity that played on the roles that women both ascribed to themselves (that of the *volksmoeder*) and the expectations they had imposed on them by men while also drawing on the already intense focus of what constituted Afrikaner culture. To some extent women allowed this subjugation to happen which, in turn, questions why some would then go on to join and remain as members of a fascist organisation that emphasised and promoted their subordination. The promise of some semblance of a leadership position and agency may have allured some, Emmie included.

Taking over from Mrs Greeff, Emmie officially began working as a General in the OB on the 1st of January 1941 serving as the leader of the women’s division in the Cape, taking office at the same time as Van Rensburg. It would not be long before the OB began antagonising the NP with the party retorting in no uncertain terms. When Hans Strijdom faced pressure from the OB who were beginning to interfere in party activities in the Transvaal, Frans Erasmus feared that the same would happen in the Cape.⁵⁷⁹ Erasmus had always been a firm friend to both Emmie and Jacques and implored Emmie to consider leaving the OB before matters were made any worse.⁵⁸⁰ Her response was telling, for Emmie had grown tired of the antics of the nationalist men who appeared to simply seek means to “break” their opponents for the sake of their own cause and who valued titles above meaningful work that would benefit the *volk*.⁵⁸¹ At this time, she saw the OB as an alternative to this behaviour with their ‘humbled’ approach

⁵⁷⁸ OB transcript, p. 6.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Erasmus was also one of Emmie’s colleagues on the Federal Council and had at one time been a member of the OB. See C. Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag* p. 325.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

to the cause that did not rely on titles and structures.⁵⁸² This was not entirely true with the OB having been restructured a number of times after Van Rensburg's arrival to either remove or grant power and responsibilities to individuals based on their titles.

What she did appreciate in no uncertain terms, was the way in which the OB had approached her and coaxed her into joining. Instead of bargaining with a powerful position, one that she was given anyway, they propositioned Emmie in relation to her father. Their basic message was that of her being 'her father's daughter' and that because of her history and demonstrated abilities, she would be able to 'help them out' by stepping into a leadership position best suited to her capabilities.⁵⁸³ Furthermore, Emmie stated that she had never felt overly pressured to join nor did she feel that she was coerced or tricked into the role as opposed to actively mulling it over and making an informed decision for herself.⁵⁸⁴ She had already identified that the role would not bring the same levels of stress and pressure that her positions at the party had done but still wanted to consult Malan before she made any rash decisions in terms of who she would walk away from.

Emmie knew she could discuss the matter with Malan and have him give her a measured and well thought out response. The two had known each other since Emmie was four years old and their nearly 10 years on the NP's executives had seen them work in close quarters for the sake of their *volk*. Because of this close relationship, the two also knew the other's personality better than what they let on, particularly when they were in disagreement. During one particular argument, Malan called Emmie stubborn, an accusation that she took immense offense to providing one of the most insightful and telling quips that may even encompassed the feelings of many women who dared to give their own opinions or share their feelings on the politics of the day:

“As ek aan jou kant staan, noem jy my ‘n sterk persoonlikheid, maar as ek teen jou gaan, dan sê jy ek is koppig. Jy sal maar net moet weet jy het met dieselfde mens te doen van wie jy gesê het dat sy ook sterk gevoelens het. Maar koppig is ek sowaar nie. Ek staan maar net op my punte” [When I stand by you, you call me a strong personality, but when I go against you, you say I'm stubborn. You just have to know that you are dealing with

⁵⁸² OB transcript, p. 7.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.* She would go on to say that they were the “most beautiful words she had ever heard”.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

the same person whom you said has strong feelings. But I'm not stubborn. I just stand on my points].⁵⁸⁵

Emmie felt strongly enough about her *volk* and the potential she felt they would be able to reach to speak her mind at all times, even if it meant going against her friends or family. Her loyalty to work she intended to do for the *volk* was tested once again when she went to discuss Erasmus' suggestion to resign in light of the trouble in the north between the party and the OB with Malan before he left to speak with the offending parties.⁵⁸⁶ Their time would be rushed with Emmie deciding to return the next morning to be able to have a more relaxed and rational discussion. What followed was two hours' worth of Emmie explaining where she stood on the NP-OB relationship and her experiences within it. She claimed that Malan could not thank her enough for helping to understand the situation with more clarity, even commenting to Maria that Emmie was doing a good job binding the two groups together through her passion for the work that both planned to do and intimate understanding of the dynamics that had been governing their actions.⁵⁸⁷

The happiness that stemmed from their meeting that evening would be short lived with Emmie being summoned back to the house the next morning. In her own words, it was like an entirely different Malan had shown up overnight, one that now blatantly accused her of being a traitor and a liar regarding the true activities of the OB.⁵⁸⁸ She was completely taken aback by his words but in hindsight, may have done better to understand the reasons for Malan's outburst. Van Rensburg had been behaving in a way that made it out to seem that he was hell-bent on defying the Cradock Agreement at every opportunity and having his followers do the same.⁵⁸⁹ The newspapers were filled with the attacks and rebuttals of the two men with neither being willing to give up their positions with the optimistic stories that Emmie had told Malan that evening potentially having made him feel that she was speaking about an entirely different group of people than what he was having to deal with, thus fuelling his accusations of treason and lying.

⁵⁸⁵ OB transcript, p. 8.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁸⁹ L. Koorts: *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p. 358.



The reality however was that harsh words had been exchanged and Emmie had been hurt by someone she believed to be a close friend with whom she shared the ideals for a unified and productive *volk*. To save face and minimise the issues that may have arisen if she had continued, Emmie officially resigned from the party with her last official documented meeting as a member of the Federal Council taking place on the 8th of April 1941.⁵⁹⁰ The decision to do so would plague her for the rest of her life but at the time, she felt it was the only thing she could have done.⁵⁹¹ Her resignation shocked members of her own family, many of whom were still on very different sides of the political spectrum.⁵⁹² Her focus now lay in her role of “*Hoof-vroue-offisier*” of the Cape, a role she held in high esteem but a title that she could have done without.⁵⁹³

Figure 11: Emmie giving a speech at an OB gathering

She would continuously question the incessant need for titles based on militaristic principles and pondered the relevance of the approach particularly when it came to women in the OB.⁵⁹⁴ Work needed to be done and no amount of titles would get it done any quicker or more effectively.

⁵⁹⁰ ARCA National Party Federal Council collection PV54, 2/5, Federal Council minutes, 8 April 1941. Emmie was not a *primarii* member of the council that year and only joined the gathering on the second day as the *sekundi* stand in for Karl Bremer.

⁵⁹¹ OB transcript, p. 27. In what could be construed as an act of saving face, Emmie also maintained that she believed that one should only serve on these kinds of bodies for a set number of years so as to allow others to fulfill the roles and contribute in new and different ways. This stance was valid but did not explain why she spent nearly 10 years on the Federal Council and *Hoofbestuur* as opposed to only serving for the three that she claimed she intended on seeing through.

⁵⁹² Colin and Gladys stood firm in their support for the United Party with Colin serving as Smuts' Minister of Justice while Hannah joined the South African Women's Auxiliary Service that had encouraged women to participate in the war effort. The younger Tibbie remained with the NP with their mother deciding to stay out of politics for the sake of her own sanity.

⁵⁹³ *Die OB*, “Boodskappe van die Leiers”, 12 November 1941, p. 1.

⁵⁹⁴ OB transcript, p. 13. She states outright that she did not enjoy or understand the military styling of titles and structures, implying that it was better suited to their male counterparts who may have felt inferior without them.

Efficiency can also be used to describe the way in which Emmie was running her personal life as well as those of her children despite her three daughters being very much their own people by this stage of their lives. Emmie inserted herself to the extent that she essentially arranged the marriages of not one, but all three of her daughters in different points of the 1940s. The first to face their mother's matchmaking process was Iona who through reportedly little effort on her own was set up with and eventually engaged to one Geoffrey Godley, a Pretoria based civil servant two years her senior.⁵⁹⁵ At only 21 years old, Emmie had arranged for their coupling up that saw them getting married on the 21st of June 1941 with two sons following soon after. Emmie could not have been more delighted to become a grandmother but the process of getting to that point may have alienated her more than what her children let on.⁵⁹⁶ The marriage would breakdown several years later with Iona suing for custody in 1947 before remarrying and going on to have more children with her second husband, Dirk Hamman. The ill-matched marriage so early on in her life was not part of how she had envisioned her future.⁵⁹⁷

Without the additional strain of duties at the NP, Emmie was free to devote her time to the OB, immediately throwing herself into a number of organising committees and bodies in the way only she could. Within commandos, duties were divided on gendered lines with women being tasked with "general" duties that essentially kept the organisation going through fundraising, administrative work and "encouraging the singing of folk songs".⁵⁹⁸ The fundraising element was then expanded to encompass the Emergency Relief Fund that had been set up to provide assistance and relief to the families of OB members the Smuts war time government had interred. War time measures saw the confiscation of weapons and the banning of extremist tactics with those breaking these laws then being taken into custody. The OB had been participating in the intimidation of South African Union Defence Force soldiers and in other acts of civil disobedience as ways of expressing their distaste for involvement in the war with an internment camp being set up in Koffiefontein in the Free State that was specifically for these male troublemakers, meaning that their families were more than likely left without breadwinners.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁵ Interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.* Emmie had never forced her daughters to marry the men per se but made it clear that those she was setting them up with were people she envisioned her children spending the rest of their lives with.

⁵⁹⁸ C. Blignaut: "From fundraising to Freedom Day: the nature of women's general activities in the *Ossewabrandwag*, 1939-1943", *New Contree*, (66) (2013), p. 125.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 124-126.

Emmie sat on the board of trustees for the fund in her capacity as the *hoof-vroue-offisier* of the Cape and was responsible for managing the commandos who would report to the board as to who was in need of assistance.⁶⁰⁰ A familiar face on the board was that of M.E.R. who had found herself involved in the OB out of duty to the *volk* and served as the regional commander for Swellendam, her home district.⁶⁰¹ The two women had worked in close quarters at the NP in the mid-1930s but had always come from very different backgrounds. M.E.R. had come from a poor farming family in Swellendam and faced numerous uphill battles to obtain her university education and make something of herself. She had been involved in politics from the earliest days of the nationalist women's parties and lead the ACVV with great aplomb, the latter possibly being one of her most noteworthy and remembered roles.⁶⁰² Emmie had not had to face the same challenges to come by her roles, though this did not necessarily mean she had not earned them nor did she not deserve to be there in the first place. Emmie, operated in the same spaces but had not had to overcome economic hardship or class boundaries and the explicit biases imposed on her based on her socio-economic class. The circumstances of one's birth are only worth as much as what is made of them and the two women provide examples of the capabilities of people from either side of the spectrum who made the most of the opportunities that were given to them.

Emmie put her opportunity to lead the OB women of the Cape to use as soon as what was possible. Outside of her work on the board for the relief fund, a 'friendship centre' was opened in the *Groote Kerk* building on Adderley Street in Cape Town and served as a meeting and socialising place for OB women that could also play host to workshops and events of an OB nature.⁶⁰³ As a means of leading from the front, Emmie spent every Friday afternoon of November 1941 at the centre, making herself available to the women she was in charge of leading.⁶⁰⁴ Word of her being available was distributed through the official mouth piece, *Die OB*, that would also play host to Van Rensburg's attacks on Malan and anyone else he wished to publicly go after. Numerous thought pieces filled the pages of the weekly newspaper with the occasional comment from members of the commandos. What is glaringly obvious is the lack of women's voices in the pages of the paper with almost no attention being given to their

⁶⁰⁰ C. Blignaut: "From fundraising to Freedom Day: the nature of women's general activities in the *Ossewabrandwag*, 1939-1943", *New Contree*, (66) (2013), pp. 125, 127.

⁶⁰¹ J.C. Steyn, *Die 100 Jaar van MER*, p. 382.

⁶⁰² M.E.R. was also a gifted writer and published an extensive number of short stories, novels and prose throughout her life.

⁶⁰³ *Die OB*, "OB Vriendskapsentrum: vroueafdeling aandag!", 24 October 1941, p.3.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

views or opinions on OB or other matters.⁶⁰⁶ Not even Emmie was regularly granted space to write fully-fledged articles on the same issues that the men appeared to be able to speak about endlessly. The minimal space that women were given was often dominated by reports of Emmie's speeches and contributions to the Cape cohort in particular.

The Cape OB had always operated differently to its counterparts in the northern provinces of South Africa and there was a distinctive difference in the approaches to handling differences and disputes, with the Cape giving an impression of employing a measured and more constitutionally conscious approach.⁶⁰⁷ The hardened groups of the Transvaal and Free State were quick to react with more explicitly aggressive tones and were the most extreme of the regional divisions.⁶⁰⁸ The underlying pursuit of the republican ideal through disciplined Afrikaner collective action bound the divisions but did not mask the inherent differences that became glaringly obvious later on. Even as a representative of the Cape OB, Emmie played a larger role in representing OB women in general and attended events as such. Her involvement was often punctuated with the fact that she was a daughter of the Steyn family who had wholly given herself to the OB cause. One such event was a ceremonial wreath laying at the foot of the *Vrouemonument* in Bloemfontein, where her attendance was noted and commemorated by members of the local women's commando.⁶⁰⁹ Emmie's attendance was not limited to small commemoration ceremonies but was always duly noted at the two official OB celebratory days that took place annually.⁶¹⁰

Being at the forefront of representation for women in the OB would not simply require showing face at fundraising days and laying wreaths at gravesites and meant that Emmie would need to

⁶⁰⁶ This lack of representation in the official mouthpiece says a lot about the true agency of women in the OB. Authors like Blignaut have maintained that the women articulated their own views on OB matters but their silence in the few spaces that would have provided them with a platform may show otherwise. While they may have had autonomy in their organisational bodies, without their words one cannot truly say that they were able to exercise agency.

⁶⁰⁷ Erika Theron iterated similar sentiments. See J.A. Tayler: "With her shoulder to the wheel: the public life of Erika Theron (1907-1990), DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 2010, p. 87.

⁶⁰⁸ C. Marx: *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag*, pp. 310-327.

⁶⁰⁹ C. Blignaut: "From fundraising to Freedom Day: the nature of women's general activities in the *Ossewabrandwag*, 1939-1943", *New Contree*, (66) (2013), p. 148 & ARCA M.E.J. Myburgh collection, 5, OB scrapbook, 1938-1941. The ceremony formed part of a larger movement that worked to repair the gravesites of OB members.

⁶¹⁰ The OB celebrated the Battle of Majuba Hill on the 27th of February each year as a tribute to the Boer victory over the British in 1881 as well as an annual "*fondsdaag*" or funds day organised by the women as a means of collecting donations and other financial contributions that would assist in the running of the OB with Majuba Hill celebrations taking place at the original battle site near Volksrust in Natal. Emmie was annually billed as a speaker at both of these events with the contents of her speeches often being summarised in *Die OB* the following week.

be willing to put herself forward in times of strife on behalf of the people she represented. And willing she was. As part of the war time restrictions imposed by the Smuts government, South Africans affiliated with non-military groups or organisations were barred from wearing uniforms for the sake of war time material rations. In the eyes of the government this made sense but was perceived as a personal attack on the OB women who had adopted white dresses as a form of uniform.⁶¹¹ Emmie and Elsabe Sauer had spearheaded the drive for women to adopt the dresses with white being the colour of choice due to its availability and the likelihood of poorer women being able to fashion uniforms with limited funding.⁶¹² It also meant that the women could not be distinguished from one another by their socio-economic class.⁶¹³

At an OB meeting shortly after the banning, Emmie openly dismissed the ruling prompting Smuts to pay a visit to Tibbie to inform her of her youngest child's activities. He attempted to reign Emmie in through her mother by reminding her that Emmie could have very well gone to jail for her defiance and would have been put in there by her own brother, then the Minister of Justice.⁶¹⁴ True to form, Emmie did not care to listen too intently and continued her act of disobedience at an OB meeting several days later. When asked if she was aware of the uniform ban while decked out in said outfit, she retorted that she was well aware of the ban and that the implementation of the ban would simply drive them to find another colour to use: "*Daar is nog baie kleure in die wêreld*" [There are still many colours in the world.]⁶¹⁵ When a particularly charming heckler questioned what the women would do when they inevitably ran out of colours to use, she finally retorted with a quintessentially Emmie quip: "*Ons sal doen wat Eva gedoen het. Dis al wat oorbly!*" [We will do what Eve did (and go without clothes). That is all that is left!]⁶¹⁶

It was inevitable that Colin in his capacity as Minister of Justice would have to become involved, finding himself caught between his duty as the head of the judiciary and his unrelenting sister. The threat of imprisonment was becoming more than just a threat and Emmie was very nearly arrested in spite of all of her protestations. After thorough negotiations and the

⁶¹¹ A. Blake: *Wit Terroriste: Afrikaner saboteurs in die Ossewabrandwag*, p. 59.

⁶¹² Elsabe Sauer was the wife of Paul Sauer, a longtime Malanite and later cabinet minister. Elsabe was active in the NVP, was a member of the editorial board of *Die Burgeres* and in 1934 she was one of the seven members of the Federal Council of the NP which voted against Fusion. Her husband was also a member of the OB until they had to choose between NP and OB membership (SA Biografiese Woordeboek, volume V, pp.716-718).

⁶¹³ OB transcript, p. 33.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*

twisting of several arms, Emmie was let off with a warning, allowing her mother to relax and not have to bear the consequences of one of her children imprisoning the other and having their family name tainted by this kind of behaviour. More than anything, Emmie's defiance had more to do with the anger and frustration she felt around Smuts giving exorbitant amounts of attention to a frivolity such as this when there were women and children of OB internees who were starving and without relief.⁶¹⁷ Emmie saw herself as victorious in the aftermath of the event but knew that there would always be more pressing issues that warranted attention away from the colour of her dress.

In May 1942 Emmie lead the development of an OB sewing-circle that would be held at the friendship centre. The group would meet every Tuesday afternoon for two hours and would serve as an opportunity for OB women to socialise and develop their skills as seamstresses by learning from one another.⁶¹⁸ The weekly meetings would also allow women to step outside of their homes for a short while to meet other like-minded women in spaces that they felt comfortable on. The group was a massive success and grew in attendees steadily over its existence with Tibbie Steyn paying a visit and spending the day with the group chatting about their activities and their personal lives.⁶¹⁹ The centre served as one of the greatest success of Emmie's time at the OB and demonstrated her devotion to her *volk* and their well-being. Afrikaner women had always been at the epicentre of her vision and she would spend the rest of her time at the OB devoted to their cause.

Even while occupied with OB activities, Emmie had still found time to play match maker for her daughters, this time involving herself in the personal life of her youngest, Ileana. The announcement of Ileana's engagement to Jacob de Vos was made on the 27th of May 1942, the same De Vos who was the organising secretary for the OB in the Cape and had been instrumental in brokering Emmie's move to the organisation. Ileana was only 17 at the time and had been a promising medical student at the University of Cape Town.⁶²⁰ The wedding took place in the *Groote Kerk* shortly thereafter and was seen as an official "*Ossewabrandwag-huwelik*" [OB wedding] with Van Rensburg signing the marriage register as a witness on behalf of the groom. More than 800 guests were invited to the reception at Kelvin Grove after the

⁶¹⁷ OB transcript, p. 37.

⁶¹⁸ *Die OB*, "Vriendskapsentrum begin iets nuuts", 20 May 1942, p.4.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, "Vriendskapsentrum lewer steeds meer volksdiens", 30 September 1942, p.3.

⁶²⁰ De Vos was 8 years older than his betrothed and had originally come from Worcester just as her father had done.

ceremony that saw young OB girls dressed in their white dresses and the arrival of Tibbie Steyn on the arm of Van Rensburg, had concluded.⁶²¹ Their marriage would be a successful one but Ileana would never manage to be rid of the resentment she felt towards Emmie for having her get married at such a young age.⁶²²

Nerina, the middle Du Toit child, would be the last to face the match making process but would not have it thrust upon her at quite so young an age. After completing her Masters studies in Afrikaans and Dutch at the University of Cape Town, Nerina took a year off to live at *Onze Rust* after having taken an interest in writing her grandmother's biography.⁶²³ She would grow incredibly close to her grandmother, learning about her life and being regaled with life lessons and anecdotes to her hearts content. Nerina kept her parents well informed of her progress with her letters eventually reaching Emmie who had been spending a considerable amount of time travelling to OB commandos. The book would never see its completion, when after returning from a trip to the Transvaal, Nerina found that her nearly 200 pages worth of work had been burned by her relatives on the farm.⁶²⁴ Tibbie had been remarkably open with Nerina and had shared stories that the rest of the Bloemfontein Steyn cohort deemed inappropriate for publication.⁶²⁵

Nerina had always been the 'unorthodox' child but was granted her being by her family, Emmie included. Her love life was well known to her parents and siblings as were her numerous suitors, one of whom she would go on to marry. The Bloemfontein based Dr Awie Ferreira had come to know Nerina during her stay at *Onze Rust* and had also known Jacques through their mutual occupations and was therefore deemed a suitable match for the middle Du Toit child. The two would marry in 1943 but it was not meant to be, divorcing shortly after the birth of their only son in 1945. Nerina struggled to bond with her young son and after attempting to raise him with support from Emmie, Nerina officially signed over custody of her son to her parents with whom he was to be raised until the age of 18.⁶²⁶

⁶²¹ *Die OB*, "Ossewabrandwag-huwelik in Groote Kerk", 9 September 1942, p.4. The paper likened Tibbie's arrival as having "deep symbolic meanings" with the *volksmoeder* arriving on the arm of the leader of the man who would bring the republican ideal into the future.

⁶²² Interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019. Emmie reportedly used the excuse of her sister Hannah having been married at 17 as a means of justifying the marriage.

⁶²³ E. Truter: "Rachel Isabella Steyn, 1905-1955, Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 1994, pp. 235-236.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁵ Interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019.

⁶²⁶ KAB CSC Argus Restitutions and divorce proceedings, 2/1/1/1505, case 1002.

In the beginning of 1943, the OB underwent yet another reorganisation of its structure and rank allocation. The *Grootraad* (GR) was restructured to have a series of leaders managing portfolios followed by representatives of regional commandos as well as the reorientation of divisions based on geographical spheres rather than provinces. Emmie would now fall under *Gebied A* and represent the western regions of the Cape Province under her title as General.⁶²⁷ The rearrangement brought with it the opportunity to serve on the *Grootraad* and meant that she would once again be required to travel to and from meetings that often took place in the north. The back and forth began to take a toll on her body having developed sciatica during Nerina's stay in Bloemfontein, effectively preventing her from travelling for several weeks.⁶²⁸ Whether these meetings were worth the trouble is debatable. Women that sat on the GR did not occupy positions higher than that of General and did not serve as leaders of the numerous portfolios that had been established. Their duties were bound to their own divisions and would be 'consulted' by the male members of the OB before they took actions that had a direct effect on the women's commandos.⁶²⁹ Outside of this, their involvement in the management of the GR and the broader OB remain limited and effectively subordinate to the men they were expected to report to.

Furthermore, the tactics the OB began employing in 1942 were not reflective of the OB that Emmie had signed up for. Bomb planting and personal attacks were becoming regular occurrences as the war dragged on with the approach bearing far closer to home than what Emmie would have liked. Clandestine commandos of the OB planted a bomb outside of the offices of her brother, Colin, in his capacity as Minister of Justice as a retort for the OB members interred at Koffiefontein. Colin was unharmed during the attempt but it illustrated the measures the group was willing to take to disrupt the status quo. Emmie was forthright in her condemnation for the attack and was echoed in her sentiments by fellow OB leader Dr Erika Theron.⁶³⁰ For Emmie, the OB's power lay in their ability to mobilise Afrikaners for the sake of a disciplined pursuit of the republic through their words and actions that did not endanger lives.⁶³¹

⁶²⁷ ARCA J.F. van der Merwe collection PV 103 1/2/2/2/1, OB Grootraad meeting minutes, 12 March 1943.

⁶²⁸ KAB A969 Box 7, Emmie – Nerina, 3 May 1943.

⁶²⁹ ARCA J.F. van der Merwe collection PV 103 1/2/2/2/1, OB Grootraad meeting minutes, 2-4 November 1943.

⁶³⁰ OB transcript, p. 25. Theron, much like M.E.R. had also been a figure with whom Emmie shared spaces and platforms. The Stellenbosch sociologist was involved in the command structure of the Cape cohort alongside Emmie. She too had come from a lower-middle class background and differed from Emmie in her upbringing and circumstances. See J.A. Tayler: "With her shoulder to the wheel: the public life of Erika Theron (1907-1990)", Unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of South Africa, 2010.

⁶³¹ *Die OB*, "Geesdrif vir OB word groter", 30 May 1945, p. 2.

As the war was nearing its end, the OB initiated an effort to raise funds to send to German widows and their families. The group felt compelled to contribute in any way they could to lessen the effects of their losses that they felt they understood.⁶³² Emmie saw it as their ‘Christian duty’ to step up and play a part in helping people rebuild their lives after the losses they had endured. While these calls were made to their community, Emmie took the opportunity to encourage members to realign their attention to the republican cause and their wish to have power to vote for a president of their choosing. To this end, Emmie played on the iconography of her father in a featured piece in *Die OB* that attempted to show just how prosperous and happy the *volk* had been when they been allowed to decide on a president for themselves.⁶³³ Just as they had used Steyn and his legacy to have Emmie join their ranks, Emmie herself saw the value in employing the same tactics to make her point heard.

Just as quickly as she had been swept up in the feverish activities surrounding the founding and growth of the OB, Emmie found herself in a position that saw her making the decision to move on from the OB. With Nerina having moved back to the Du Toit home in Sea Point after the birth of her son, Emmie took on the responsibility of helping to care for the young boy alongside her duties with the OB. Though they were not as extensive as her NP duties, her role at the OB required her full presence and attention and she knew that she would be doing those in her command a disservice by not being as focused as she had been. When Nerina’s young son was officially placed under her guardianship in 1945, Emmie was already 47 years old and thought to be well shot of raising a young child. This did not deter her however and she took in the one year old as if he were her own child. On the 8th of January 1946 she officially resigned from her position at the OB, making way for Erika Theron to take her place, feeling that her position was in safe hands.⁶³⁴ This is not to say that she was done with the OB and as a card carrying member, she was still asked to address gatherings from time to time with one occasion being a Bellville meeting in which she encouraged members to continue pursuing the republican ideal through active citizenry rather than waiting for it to be achieved through negotiation.⁶³⁵

⁶³² *Die OB*, “Oproep is hulp aan Duitse vroue”, 23 May 1945, p. 1.

⁶³³ *Die OB*, “Moederverloor is alles verloor: verslaande volk besiel deur sy president”, 10 October 1945, n.p.

⁶³⁴ KAB A969 Box 3, Hans van Rensburg – Emmie, 18 January 1946 & *Die Vaderland*, 20 February 1946, n.p.

⁶³⁵ *Die OB*, “Onderhandelings kon Republiek nie bring”, 28 February 1951, p.6.

With the end of her working relationship with the OB came the end of her feud with Malan and the two made peace once again shortly after her resignation. Malan was still in the throes of the NP machine but was willing to meet with his old friend and resume their friendship, though it would never return to its true form.⁶³⁶ The two agreed to disagree and would remain as such until Malan's death in 1959, often visiting one another on special occasions and never forgetting to call and write for one another's birthdays.⁶³⁷ The same appears to have been true for her friendships with the other nationalist leaders she had forgone in her move, with letters bearing their names and friendly banter being included in the papers that Emmie left for the world to read. Her advocacy and political campaigning had come to an official end but her zeal for the *volk* never did. She re-joined the NP and was an immensely proud nationalist the day the party won the election in June 1948, celebrating the win the only way she knew how, with a dinner party.⁶³⁸



Figure 12: The women of the Steyn family (L-R): Hannah Fichardt; Tibbie van der Merwe; Tibbie Steyn; Emmie du Toit; Gladys Steyn

⁶³⁶ OB transcript p. 19.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁸ *Die Huisgenoot*, "Emmie du Toit glo aan 'n 'teetafel'", 17 October 1969, p.?.

Concluding remarks

Biographical studies are a substantial undertaking, require devotion, extensive attention to detail and an immeasurable dose of empathy and should therefore not be taken lightly. To write a life is to write of the confusion, the contradictions, the elation and the sorrow that comes with the human condition. This comes with a responsibility to fairly examine all aspects of the individual without judgment and a healthy dose of critical thinking. With a guided hand and an array of material on which to draw, this work has attempted to illustrate an individual who found herself at the epicenter of some of the most important developments in not only Afrikaner nationalist but broader South African history. It has not necessarily attempted to serve as a test of her character or actions but rather see her life in context as an Afrikaner, as woman and as a member of an iconic family with a long history of serving their people.

Emmie du Toit lived her life for her *volk* and did so entirely on her own terms. There were fleeting moments of apprehension and fear for the future but a powerful belief in the inherent abilities of her people, drove her to causes that she felt she could positively contribute, all the while wielding her influence and abilities as an informed and politically driven individual. Her background and family had set her up to be politically orientated and inquisitive, traits that would lead to her participation in leadership positions in two important Afrikaner organisations. Strong leadership was imperative for a cause to succeed and Emmie was not afraid to take charge when others had not wished to do so. Writing Emmie's life has also demonstrated that individuals are not always as they seem and that for all of the nice words one might say for the sake of a cause, they may not reflect their true intentions.

This work serves as a written representation of half of a 99-year long life that saw more than its share of tragedy and success in equal measure and must be remembered as such. The years of 1898 to 1948 were the most dramatic in their twists and turns but were also the busiest and most exciting of her life and yet still do not encompass the entirety of her existence. The years following her departure from active politics saw Emmie truly transform into the socialite she had always been. This did not entail resting on her laurels and enjoying her 'retirement' from active duty with the reality being far from this assumption. The activities that she now participated in were different but the people she kept close were not and if anything, her expansive circle of friends grew during the latter 50 years of her life.

Emmie was responsible for the care of her young grandson and devoted her time to his wellbeing and care for the rest of her life. In a way, Emmie had regained a son, one that could attempt to fill the void that had been left by the tragic passing of her own child in 1935.⁶³⁹ Beyond the addition to their family, their lives continued much the same as they had always done. Tibbie Steyn continued to make her annual pilgrimage to the Cape, always staying with Emmie and attending to their usual social obligations. Kelvin Grove continued to play host to Tibbie and Jacques' annual birthday celebrations with each year's guest list seemingly attempting to outdo the last. Emmie regained friends with whom her relationship had become fraught as a result of the political unrest that marred the 1930s and 40s while gaining new ones who often sought out advice from the experienced figure.⁶⁴⁰

The Du Toit's also moved the location of *Vreugde*, their Sea Point home of nearly 30 years to the base of Table Mountain at 14 Rugby Road in Oranjezicht without losing the great number of guests that flowed through their doors. Their new home had even more space for guests and with a growing number of grandchildren being added to the Du Toit and Steyn clans, enough room was always available should they wish to visit or even move in, as became the case with two of her grandchildren.⁶⁴¹ The home would also be place of mourning with the 1950s bringing with them several particularly big losses. The first was that of Tibbie Steyn on the 3rd of January 1955 a particularly painful loss given their close relationship and the degree to which Emmie had served as a pillar of strength for Tibbie throughout her life with the opposite being the case too. Next came the tragic passing of Jacques on the 8th of August 1958.⁶⁴² Emmie had lost the father of her children, her husband of nearly 50 years, her partner in life and love and more importantly, her friend. She would never remarry.

These losses did not stop Emmie from living her life and her active involvement in more social activities showed just how willing she was to keep busy and continue serving a cause. This included an honorary membership to the *Klub Here Sewentien*, the Afrikaner answer to the Cape Town City Club that offered spaces for networking and socialization.⁶⁴³ The parliamentary women's club was also regularly graced with Emmie's presence despite actually

⁶³⁹ Interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019.

⁶⁴⁰ KAB A969, various correspondence, 1950-1963.

⁶⁴¹ Interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019.

⁶⁴² See *Die Burger*, "Treffende begrafnis vir Dr J.S. du Toit", 7 August 1958, p. 3.

⁶⁴³ *Die Burger*, "Here XVII kry eerste vroulike ere-lid", 17 September 1982. Emmie would also be made head of the women's committee and later made their honorary president.

being a club for the wives and female members of parliament. At no point had Emmie stood for a seat nor was she the wife of a parliamentarian, her invitation to the group simply being borne of her popularity and relationships with many of the members. It was within this group that she became particularly close to Betsie Verwoerd, the wife of Hendrik, with whom she would share many years' worth of correspondence.⁶⁴⁴ Her sociability never appeared to wane and she continued to live her busy life until her eventual development of Alzheimer's disease and later passing in 1997 at the age of 99.⁶⁴⁵

Before the onset of her disease, Emmie had an innate ability to recall minute details of her life and knew that she had enough information on her nationalist compatriots that would make any biographer blush at any given time. It is this same innate ability that has allowed one to reconstruct her life and attempt to understand a complex figure so entirely devoted to her people. This is a woman who put her *volk* above all else, often publicly articulated narrow views of politics and society and willingly and knowingly joined an antagonistic fascist organisation renowned for its anti-Semitic, anti-war and anti-British sentiments. It is this same woman who retained lifelong friendships with Jewish and British figures of the Cape social and political scene and supported her openly gay grandson from the very moment he came out to her as a young man.⁶⁴⁶

There is a general gap in literature on women who partake in extremist right wing action, with particular emphasis on this gap in South Africa that this work has hoped to contribute towards filling. Emmie was not alone in these sentiments that she iterated throughout her time at both the NP and the OB with her colleagues in this period including people like M.E.R., Erika Theron and Elsabe Sauer. These were not random women plucked out of the oblivion to lead a random collection of outliers. These were women with reputations within their welfare, social and political circles who articulated a particular nationalist rhetoric, who then bought into the particular brand of republicanism and active citizenship that the OB promised when the NP looked to be faltering on the matter. In Emmie's case, she straddled the line between the two for a nearly two years, ultimately choosing to step away from the NP and join the OB, feeling that she had served as much time as what was necessary and that the latter could benefit from her experience and knowledge. The difference between Emmie and many of these women was

⁶⁴⁴ ARCA Betsie Verwoerd collection PV741 & KAB A969 Box 13, numerous letters from 1955-1963.

⁶⁴⁵ Interview with Pieter de Vos, 5 October 2019.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

that unlike herself, they had come from poor, lower to middle class homes and had to work that much harder to achieve results in a male-orientated and dominated world. Emmie operated in the same spheres but did not have to overcome economic hardship or class boundaries and the explicit biases imposed on her based on her socio-economic class to get to the same point. She was not involved in grassroots welfare work with the ACVV nor did she ever stand for public office as a direct representative for her people.

She clearly preferred to take the line of being a “respectable Afrikaner”, one who nobly involved themselves in causes that they feel they would have the highest likelihood of helping to achieve through their positions of power and influence. Not that the views of others ever perturbed her enough to attempt to change them, the “respectability” that she employed also came across as a perpetuation of an already elitist view that some had of her. Her privilege was her power and also a driver of her agency. She could ‘infiltrate’ circles because she was already a part of them but the ability to actually exert her power outside of them may show that she was still bound to operate by the conventions of what was expected of women in the first half of the 20th century. She championed the *volk* and more importantly, the roles that women were wanting to play in the establishment and growth of their nation.

For Emmie, there had been no clear divide between the ‘personal’ and the ‘private’ realms of her life. Her colleagues were her friends, she used these relationships to sway opinions and gain access to spaces that may very well have been closed off to other women who did not share her societal status. She saw herself as a bastion of the old Afrikaner aristocracy who could close the gap and forge bonds between the often-fractured factions of Afrikanerdom while ultimately working towards the realization of the republican ideal. To some, like members of her own family, she was a social busy body who loved nothing more than to meddle in business outside of her own. The reality is that she was both.

With Abe Bailey’s poignant words in mind, one cannot help but wonder just how different the trajectory may have been for the multiple institutions and individuals touched by Emmie’s involvement, never mind just how different her life would have been if she had in fact been born a man. It may have proved to be an easier way to the top but would not have brought with it the same level of complexity and depth that her life as Emmie would have done. She had encompassed the best elements of her parents, with her father’s political aspirations and diplomatic approach to service, coupled with her mother’s passion for the wellbeing of her *volk*

and the women and children that formed its foundations. One cannot help but feel a little admiration for the woman who never seemed to tire from her duties, always ensuring she had bestowed her wisdom on whoever would listen. Unsolicited opinions and all.

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Pieter de Vos, Cape Town (figures 5 & 7)

Steyn family, *Onze Rust*, Bloemfontein (figure 4)

Ossewabrandwag archive (figures 10 & 11)