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978-0-521-03364-0 - Selections from the Smuts Papers - Volume I, June 1886-May 1902

Edited by W. K. Hancock and Jean van der Poel

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VOLUME I

JUNE 1886 - MAY 1902

EDITED BY

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PREFACE

The appearance of the first four volumes of *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, covering the period 1886–1919, completes the second part of a four-fold publication plan which began some fifteen years ago. The first part was completed when *Smuts—The Sanguine Years, 1870–1919* by Sir Keith Hancock was published in 1962. The whole programme will have been concluded when the second volume of the biography appears and is followed by further volumes of private papers covering the last thirty years of Smuts's life. Meanwhile a fifth undertaking, which is basic to all the others, has been all but accomplished—the establishment of a great Collection of Smuts Papers.

The story of the origins and course of these projects has been told in the Creighton Lecture in History entitled *The Smuts Papers*, which was delivered by Professor Hancock in 1955 and published by the Athlone Press (1956). Here only a brief account of it need be given.

Shortly after the death of General Smuts the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press sought to publish an authoritative biography of the late Chancellor of Cambridge University and invited Professor Hancock to write it. He accepted after he had had discussions with Mrs Smuts and with Mr J. C. Smuts, General Smuts's son and literary executor, and had made a first examination of his papers, then rather precariously housed in the Doornkloof farm-house where the Smuts family had lived since 1909. The collection of papers was rich, large, and in considerable disorder. Before it could be efficiently used it needed to be arranged and indexed, and this necessity led to a decision to establish the Smuts Collection.

But much more lay behind that decision than the biographer's need for orderly access to his material. In Professor Hancock's discussions with South African historians and, in particular, with two Vice-Chancellors, Dr E. G. Malherbe

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of Natal and Dr T. B. Davie of Cape Town, it became clear that the setting up of the Smuts Collection would be a permanent and valuable contribution to historical scholarship as well as a lasting memorial to an outstanding man. There also emerged at this time a suggestion that some volumes of Smuts Papers should eventually be published. The first survey of the papers had disclosed that the Collection was much richer in in-letters than in out-letters, for Smuts wrote to his friends in his own hand and kept no copies of such letters. This deficiency would have to be made good, and it was realized that owners of Smuts letters could be more confidently approached if they could be asked to donate them, or copies of them, to a properly-established permanent Collection.

It was, perhaps, to the decisive mind and will of the late Dr T. B. Davie that the establishment of the Smuts Collection was chiefly due. It was largely his drive and enthusiasm that brought into existence a properly constituted Trust to be responsible for the safe-keeping and management of the Collection and to administer its funds. It was he who persuaded a member of his staff, Dr J. van der Poel, to turn archivist and arranged for her to be seconded from the Department of History to the full-time service of the Trust for two and a half years. It was he who obtained permission from Mr J. C. Smuts temporarily to house the papers in the Jagger Library of the University of Cape Town until both the biographical and archival tasks should have been finished.

The Trust was initially endowed with a contribution of £5,000 from funds at the disposal of Mr J. C. Smuts and a grant of a like amount from the Nuffield Foundation. By January 1952 the Trust had been constituted, its members then being Sir Alfred Hennessy, Mr Gerald Orpen, Dr E. G. Malherbe, Dr Colin Steyn, Dr T. B. Davie and Mr P. C. Vellacott. Its management was undertaken, in an honorary capacity, by Messrs Syfret's Trust Company. Professor Hancock became its academic adviser. In July 1952 Dr van der Poel, with the assistance of Miss Joan Bradley, could begin the task of sorting, listing and indexing the Papers.

At the time of writing this Preface (May 1964) the indexed documents of the Collection number approximately 45,000, of which more than half—including nearly 23,000 letters—are

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private papers. There are also many documents, both private and public, which are of minor importance and consequently have not been indexed. Large additions have been made to the original nucleus of the Collection at Doornkloof.

Professor Hancock and Dr van der Poel from the start exerted themselves to bring into the Collection as many out-letters as possible and many thousands of these were in fact added to it, notably the magnificent series, written to members of the Gillett and Clark families over a period of about forty years, which had been in the care of the late Mrs Margaret C. Gillett. Valuable contributions were also made by Lady Moore, by the executors of Mr and Mrs Thomas Lamont, by Mrs S. G. Millin, Mr L. S. Amery, and others. Mrs Smuts had preserved a large number of her husband's letters, although those pre-dating the Anglo-Boer War had, but for a few survivors, been destroyed as a safety measure when the British forces were about to enter Pretoria. She also gave to the Collection the volumes of press cuttings about her husband which she had begun to make even before their marriage and had continued to keep up to the time of his death. When she died, in February 1954, these *Plakboeke*, as well as all the official papers in the Collection, were, by the terms of their joint will, transferred to the State Archives at Pretoria. By that time these papers had been listed and indexed and two microfilm copies of the *Plakboeke* had been made. The private papers, bequeathed to Mr J. C. Smuts, remained in the strong-room of the Jagger Library.

It was clearly desirable that the Smuts Papers should not remain dispersed. Many of the official documents, though available elsewhere, had been annotated by Smuts; others, notably those written, usually in his own hand, during the Anglo-Boer War, are unique. To ensure the eventual reunion of all the parts of the Collection and their safe-keeping in a single repository, it was arranged that the Trustees would, on the completion of the publication and archival tasks undertaken by Professor Hancock and Dr van der Poel, transfer the documents in their charge to the South African Archives at Pretoria on conditions which would permanently safeguard the unity of the whole Collection. This was possible only because of the public spirit and generosity of Mr J. C. Smuts

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who was ready to make the magnificent gift of his father's private papers to the State Archives. Two microfilm copies of the private papers had in the meantime been begun and the indexes were prepared in triplicate. It is the intention of the Trustees to give the microfilm copies to the two universities of which Smuts was Chancellor—Cambridge and Cape Town.

Access by research students to the Collection and to the microfilm copies of it will be governed, as regards the public documents, by the rules laid down by public authority in Great Britain and South Africa: and, as regards the private documents, by definitions of 'the closed period' which the donors of some important material have stipulated as a condition of gift.

The financial resources of the Smuts Archives Trust have been relatively small and its expenditure frugal, but the sum of £10,000 with which the Trust began its activities did not suffice for the clerical assistance which has always been required, for the microfilming which has been necessary and, latterly, for academic assistance in preparing the *Selections from the Smuts Papers* for the Press. Further sustenance was needed, and was provided. A most generous additional gift of £3,500 was received from the Nuffield Foundation; the Managers of the Smuts Memorial Fund in Cambridge and the Abe Bailey Trust in Cape Town made spontaneous contributions of £4,000 and £2,000 respectively. These funds have continued to be administered, far beyond the period originally contemplated, by Syfret's Trust Company, whose always accessible officer, Mr J. A. B. Cooper, has carried the main burden of the secretarial work.

In making this first choice of something over a thousand documents out of many times that number, the editors have been guided by two main considerations: the historical importance of the selected documents, and their value as records of the life and work and thought, not only of a leading statesman, but of a man of rich and complex personality. Thus, among the papers that reflect the political issues of his times, will be found purely personal and family letters that help to depict and explain Jan Smuts. But documents of historical importance necessarily preponderate; of the many

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family letters in the Collection only samples are given. It should perhaps be explained why, with one early exception, no letters from Isie Smuts appear in these volumes. Although she wrote to her husband regularly when he was away from home, she subsequently destroyed these letters. Some of her letters to other persons survive. They are lively, intelligent, humane, and they show what a loss the Smuts Papers have suffered through her self-effacement.

In selecting in-letters, the editors decided to print a relatively large number from each of a few persons, chosen because of their closeness to Smuts, or their influence on him, or their special qualities of mind or heart, or their epistolary gifts, rather than to select widely but scrappily among scores of correspondents. The great bulk of the selections are from Smuts's private papers. But, at certain points in the chronological sequence, other material has been included in order to illustrate important periods of Smuts's life which are almost without record in the private papers. Some of this material has been taken from the public papers in the Smuts Collection, chiefly of the Anglo-Boer War years; some of it has been copied from documents in the State Archives at Pretoria, notably the Staatsprocureur (S.P.) series, in order to provide some idea of what Smuts did as State Attorney of the South African Republic; some of it has been taken from the Cape Town newspapers for which he wrote political articles and paragraphs in his first lean years of practice at the Bar.

The documents in these volumes have been, with two exceptions, printed without editorial excisions. The first exception is that, in some cases, only extracts have been given from Smuts's longer writings, though others, notably the *Memoirs of the Boer War*, have been printed in full. The second exception is the greater number of the letters to members of the Gillett and Clark families. These have been taken from typed copies which the late Mrs M. C. Gillett presented to the Smuts Collection. The editors are satisfied that the excisions made in the typescript by Mrs Gillett are minor ones; on the other hand her footnotes to the letters, and the background material which she compiled, are valuable additions to the Smuts Collection.

The translation of Dutch and Afrikaans originals has been

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entirely the work of Dr J. van der Poel. The annotation of all the documents has also been her work, with some valuable assistance which is acknowledged below. The biographical notes will be found, arranged in alphabetical order, at the end of Volume IV. The footnotes are explanatory, not interpretive; nor has one wished to provide in them a potted history of Smuts's times. If pedantry has been avoided and reasonable curiosity satisfied, the notes will have served their purpose.

In deciding questions of transcription the editors, in consultation with the publishers, have taken the view that intelligibility and readability should be the chief criteria. They have not reproduced oddities of writing, disturbing to the reader, which the original documents may contain. Thus, they have usually expanded abbreviations, but not when these are significant, and not in the Dutch and Afrikaans documents, which will be used by comparatively few readers. They have improved wayward punctuation. They have corrected obvious slips in spelling and syntax made by educated writers, but have not corrected the mistakes of unlettered writers nor, in the text, the misquotations of the literate. They have written all dates and addresses in a standard form and have introduced some order into the chaotic use of capitals. Dates inserted by the editors have been enclosed in square brackets and uncertain readings in angle brackets. Each document has been given a serial number and a reference to the Smuts Collection, e.g., Vol. 8, no. 118; Vol. CVI no. 20; Box C, no. 5. The volumes with arabic numbers contain the private letters, those with roman numerals the official papers; the boxes contain the private papers other than letters.

The editors have throughout the greater part of their work had the good fortune to find the best of colleagues. Miss Joan Bradley in the early years had a large share in listing and indexing the Collection. More recently, as academic assistant to the editors, she has shared the heavy task of reading the proofs of the *Selections* and the research required for making the notes. Miss Winifred Greenshields has for many years been a devoted secretary whose varied duties have gone far beyond those of a typist. Together they have, with the minimum of editorial supervision, made the index. But for their

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help the prolonged and meticulous task of editing the *Selections* could not have been undertaken.

The editors are deeply grateful to the directing authorities of the libraries and other institutions which they have used in the course of their work—the State Archives at Pretoria, the South African Public Library in Cape Town, the Jagger Library of the University of Cape Town, the Library of the Royal Empire Society in London and Goldsmiths' Library of the University of London. The Trustees of the South African Public Library have allowed them to make photographic copies of the Smuts letters in the Merriman Collection and to include a large number of these in the *Selections*. The kindness of Dr J. F. Pafford, Goldsmiths' Librarian of the University of London, in providing the great boon, in a vast and crowded city, of a private study within easy reach of a splendid array of reference books is remembered with particular gratitude.

Of the six Trustees who in 1951 accepted responsibility for the linked enterprises described in this Preface only Dr E. G. Malherbe is still serving. His present co-Trustees are Dr J. P. Duminy, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Mr C. S. Corder, of Syfret's Trust, Cape Town, and Mr H. S. Bennett, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. The editors wish to record their deep appreciation of the support which they have received from the present Trustees as well as from their predecessors, whose names were recorded earlier in this Preface. The editors wish also to express their indebtedness to the Cambridge University Press for its invariable patience, courtesy and helpfulness, and, together with the Syndics of the Press, to acknowledge with gratitude a grant from the Smuts Memorial Fund towards the production of these volumes.

18 May 1964

JEAN VAN DER POEL
W. K. HANCOCK

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