

Mining Magnates and World War One

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Whilst researching for my most recent book on South Africa and the First World War in Africa, three names – mining magnates – came to the fore: Abe Bailey, George Farrar and Percy Fitzpatrick as well as that of Lady Phillips, the wife of Lionel Phillips, one time mining magnate. Of these, I knew something of Fitzpatrick as the author of *Jock of the Bushveld* and having been the inspiration behind the two-minute silence on Armistice Day, Bailey as a friend of Jan Smuts and Louis Botha, and Lionel Phillips from a biography I'd read years ago, but Farrar? Despite growing up on the East Rand – Boksburg to be precise – the names Farrar Park and Farramere had given no clue to the one-time proprietor of ERPM and MP for Boksburg and Benoni. Somewhere I picked up that he had been involved in German South West Africa and tracked him down. Reading through his personal papers at Rhodes House Library, Oxford, a whole new set of revelations came to light and I was hooked. If this is what Farrar did, what did the others do? And how did Fitzpatrick, a little-known author, at least outside of South Africa, get to have such an international impact? Over the next forty-five minutes or so, I'm going to share my findings on these and other influential mining figures in South Africa.

In August 1914, South Africa entered World War One, not by choice but as part of the British Empire. However, in a show of good faith for having been granted responsible government in 1906/7 and Dominion status on Union in 1910, Louis Botha's government offered to maintain internal peace so that Britain could recall the Imperial Garrison troops. Discussions took place behind closed doors regarding the extent to which South Africa would support Britain, although Botha had already let Britain know in 1911 that if an opportunity arose to obtain German South West Africa, South Africa would take it. Cabinet, though, was divided over the decision to invade German South West Africa. The concern was not over the capture of the German colony, but rather the impact this would have on English-Afrikaans relations. The final decision would rest with parliament. However, this would only happen in September following the arrival of the replacement Governor General and High Commissioner, Lord Buxton. Parliament finally met between 11 and 13 September and voted to invade German South West Africa by 92 votes to 12 following an incident at Nakob on the German South West/Union border. Sir George Farrar, of East Rand Proprietary Mines (ERPM) and MP for Boksburg and Benoni, having left England soon after war was declared, assessed the parliamentary session as follows:

I must say that I think that if ever a man has played the game for the British Empire this time it has been Botha, and he has fairly burnt his boats with his own people. They expected the usual opposition from Hertzog, but I really think he had great trouble with his own people. Hertzog's attitude was what we expected – a kind of friendly neutrality, that is, they would be quite prepared to defend their own homes, but why attack the Germans in German S.West, since if the Germans had the better of the Allies they would be in an awkward position. Hertzog argued that the people of England were divided on the question of the War as three Ministers had resigned, and all this rubbish. At the bottom of it all was personal hatred of Botha. What he [Hertzog] wished to convey was if only Botha would consult him all would go well. Anyhow, on the division he only got 12 supporters and it went through.¹

The people felt otherwise and armed rebellion broke out on 15 October 1914 when troops refused to entrain. Botha decided to lead the loyal forces against the rebels and by December had everything under control. During this time, some preparations for the South West Africa campaign continued with the forces under General HT Lukin arriving at Luderitz Bay on Christmas Day. The German South West Africa campaign started in earnest in January 1915 and was over by the end of July of that year. As the campaign ended, the troops were given the option of enlisting to fight in East Africa or Europe, however, decisions took so long to make regarding where the Divisions would next serve, that many took themselves to England. Finally, it was decided that a Brigade would proceed to Europe under General Lukin and were to see service in Egypt and then on the Somme at Delville Wood. Others went to East Africa where they served from February 1916 to January 1917 before enlisting for service in Palestine or returning to East Africa where they served under General Jaap van Deventer. By the time the war ended on 11 November 1918 or rather 25 November 1918 in the case of East Africa, South Africa had seen around 146,000 men enlist,² excluding those who took themselves across to England to enlist in British battalions. The war cost South Africa £39 million of which £29 was loaned.

Whilst everyone was in Cape Town for the parliamentary session, Botha and Smuts met with Sir George Farrar of ERPM to ask him to help with organising the railway system in German South West Africa. In particular, he was asked to work with General Duncan MacKenzie whom Botha and Smuts were concerned was not up to the task of organising his men. This was the first time Boer and Briton would be fighting alongside each other and there was uncertainty of how their different styles would

¹ Rhodes House: MSS Afr s. 2175 George Farrar Box 12/1, 20 Sep 1914

² http://www.1914-1918.net/south_africa.html

affect the other. In particular, Botha was concerned that McKenzie would not move fast enough. Farrar was approached because of his organisation skills and his knowledge of railways. The development of railways was the responsibility of Mr Hoy, Minister for Railways and Harbours, and he too was felt to not be completely up to the task ahead of him. If Farrar could sort the one area as part of MacKenzie's force that would greatly help the Union's forces in their occupation of German South West Africa. Farrar accepted and left for German South West Africa with General Beve's forces on 18 September 1914. They found Luderitz Bay empty, the Germans having evacuated in line with instructions from the German colonial office. However, as part of their evacuation, they destroyed the railway line.³ Using men of his old regiment, the Kaffrarian Rifles, Farrar commenced repairing the line which he described to Lady Farrar back in the United Kingdom:

Generally speaking, there is no organization – everything has been pushed together without any idea of the magnitude of the job. [...] It is a very difficult job and it almost requires the same organization as Kitchener's expedition to Khartoum as we have in German S.W. also to fight the desert.'⁴

From South West Africa, in another weekly update, he wrote that 'one morning,' a German plane dropped two bombs on the camp – he was fifty yards away. 'One good thing was they put a parachute on, and you could see the bomb drop.' It killed one man and injured another nine. The following day another came and then not again. 'I don't think they will worry us much more, because they have only two aeroplanes and they can't afford to lose one.'⁵

Soon after this incident, the German South West Africa campaign started in earnest in January 1915, and Farrar was able to see the benefit of the planning and preparation he had undertaken whilst he had the chance – the rebellion had meant that military action in South West had been put on hold. Alas, Farrar died on 20 May 1915 from a punctured rib when, on 19 May, following a freak accident in which the trolley he was travelling on to check lines collided with another. His chauffeur was killed instantly whilst the third passenger survived with minor injuries. Farrar died nine days after his nephew John Harold Farrar, DSO, who was killed at Aubergs Ridge on 9 May 1914. His words of comfort to his brother seem to have been fitting for himself 'Always remember he played the game

³ G Pool, *Pionerspoorwee in Duits-Suidwest Afrika 1897-1915*, (Butterworth, Durban, 1982) p256

⁴ RH: MSS Afr s. 2175 George Farrar Box 12/1, 20 Sep 1914

⁵ RH: MSS Afr s. 2175 George Farrar, Box 12/1, 3 Jan 1915 to Lady Farrar; S Monick, 'The third man: Willy Trick and the German Air Force in South West Africa in World War One' in *South African Military History Journal* 5:3 (1988) dates the attack as 17 Dec 1914; V Alhadeff, *South Africa in two World Wars: A newspaper history* (1979) p20

right through.’⁶ On 25 May 1915, Jan Smuts wrote to Patrick Duncan of the Unionist Party and executor of Farrar’s estate that

We owe him a debt for the work he did, which could only have been accomplished by a man of great capacity and forceful character, and it was largely due to his own example in meeting the various difficulties without complaint that we heard so few complaints, because from what I have seen of the country from Luderitzbucht to Aus it is indeed most forbidding and I saw it when it was supposed to be not nearly its worst!!⁷

Lady Farrar left for South Africa on 22 May and remained for the rest of the war. At Farrar’s funeral, Colonel Charles Crewe and Colonel Byron, both mentioned later, were pall bearers.

Another magnate who was involved in South West Africa was Thomas Cullinan of Premier Mines. At the age of 52, he offered to reconnoitre a route through the Kalahari desert for the invasion. In December 1914, he started surveying 400km of desert between Kuruman and German South West locating water and drilling holes. By 4 January 1915, Colonel CLA Berrange was able to use Kuruman as a base for operations. Cullinan was appointed to the general staff as a major on ‘special service’ and in this role he supervised the opening of wells, drilling of boreholes and construction of storage tanks using Ford cars to carry water to fill the tanks. At one stage, the car in which Cullinan was travelling, broke down and he had to escape before the Germans set fire to it. Farrar offered to take Cullinan to Luderitz on the line he was working, but Cullinan refused. Within twenty-four hours, Farrar had his accident. Cullinan received a Distinguished Service Order for his work in German South West, as did his brother, Major AW Cullinan, who commanded a fighting unit called Cullinan’s Horse consisting of three squadrons. After the campaign, but still during the war, Cullinan was appointed a member of the Industries Advisory Board and the Committee for Irrigation. He also lent his chauffer to Smuts for the duration of the war.⁸

Going back to August 1914, as preparations were underway for the German South West Africa campaign, General Beyers and others were organising rebellion – they did not want German control or to support Germany, but rather saw the opportunity for South Africa to gain its independence from Britain. This enabled another mining magnate to come to the fore – Abe Bailey, a director of

⁶ Barry Imeson, *Playing the man: a biography of the mountaineer Captain John Percy Farrar, DSO* (Loose Scree, 2010)

⁷ UCT: Duncan BC294, D1.34.14 letter 25 May 1915 Smuts to Duncan

⁸ Wits: Cullinan A731 papers

Central Mining and Investment Corporation and 14 other companies. It is reported that on hearing of the outbreak of war, Bailey rushed back to South Africa from his London base, however, this does not quite fit the timeline of travel between London and Cape Town. Nevertheless, Bailey was a good friend of Smuts and Botha and was asked by them to accompany Koos de la Rey to his meetings at Treurfontein on 14 August 1914 and to talk him out of encouraging armed rebellion. This he did at a crucial time in the development of armed resistance. However, Bailey was not around when de la Rey accompanied General Beyers on the journey which ended in his, de la Rey's, death. Bailey remained involved in South Africa's war effort becoming Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General responsible for recruitment. He clearly did not restrict his services to South Africa as on 3 December 1916, his house in Bryanston Square, London, was used for the meeting which resulted in David Lloyd George replacing Herbert Asquith as Prime Minister on 7 December.⁹ In addition, he provided a Rolls Royce and a driver for Lord Kitchener's private use during the war years and offered Smuts £500 to assist him during his stay in London during 1917.¹⁰ Bailey was also head of the Rand Daily Mail syndicate which enabled the mine owners' views to be put forward and when Roderick Jones of Reuters replaced the Baron as head of Reuters in 1916/7, the South Africa government had a powerful news ally. When Jones was still in South Africa, he held back Beyer's letter of resignation until he could print a response from the government with it.¹¹

A little further afield, Dr Leander Starr Jameson, who had taken over from Rhodes as Director of the British South Africa Company and De Beers ensured that no hurdles impacted on the defence of the two British South Africa Company territories of Northern and Southern Rhodesia. In 1914, the company picked up the initial costs of recruiting five hundred men for service outside the company territories: the men were sent to Bloemfontein during the rebellion in case of need and then saw service alongside the South Africans in German South West Africa. A second battalion of five hundred men was later raised and they saw service in British and German East Africa from 1915, it being felt unfair to send them to Europe before the first battalion.

The appointment of Drummond Chaplin, a manager at Gold Fields, Johannesburg, as Administrator of Southern Rhodesia shortly before the outbreak of war in 1914 was to prove significantly helpful. Chaplin had previously been allowed to stand as an MP in the Union government and this no doubt

⁹ Peerage online; HS Webb, *The causes of the rebellion* (1915); SANA: UG 10 (1915) CD 7874, *Report on the outbreak of Rebellion and the policy of the government with regard to its suppression*; UG 46 (1916) *Report of the Judicial Committee relating to the recent Rebellion in South Africa*; PJ Sampson, *The capture of de Wet, 1914* (1915); Earl Buxton, *Botha* (1924)

¹⁰ Hamilton Sayer, *Sir Abe Bailey: His life and achievements*, (History Honours research paper, University of Cape Town, 1974)

¹¹ W Keith Hancock, *Smuts papers*, vol 3 (Cambridge University Press, 1966) p199 R Jones (Reuters) to JC Smuts, 26 Sep 1914; Jones, Roderick, *A life in Reuters* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951)

helped during the difficult war years in balancing the needs of the company and the Chartered territories with those of the Union government and Empire. He was able to write reports in a way which were of great use to the newly appointed High Commissioner. He was not replaced at Gold Fields during the war leaving his co-manager, Douglas Christopherson, to manage the Johannesburg staff alone.

According to Leo Weinthal, one time editor of *The Times* and author, Sir Henry Wilson-Fox, an Executive Director of the British South Africa Company did 'splendid works – never even recognised officially in any way – not only for the Springboks, but for the Empire's soldiers and their dependants in many directions, as did also his devoted wife, the Hon Mrs Wilson-Fox CBE who worked with indefatigable ability, zeal, and unceasingly as chairman of the South African Comforts Committee, and an active member of the London War Pensions Committee.'¹²

As the war progressed and it was obvious that Lord Kitchener's prediction of a long war was more likely, the British South Africa company reduced its unconditional support. This move further coincided with the increasing ill-health of Jameson and finally his death on 26 November 1917 in England. The year before, 1916, saw the death of another Rhodes man, Charles Rudd. Rudd had helped Rhodes set up Goldfields and following his resignation as chairman in 1902 he remained involved and interested in the company's management. His contribution to the war had started earlier when he bought the property on which Mount Vernon Hospital, Hertfordshire, was built in 1905. During the war, the hospital treated some of the 30,000 troops who suffered from tuberculosis. That Rudd was involved in the hospital during the war is discernible through the concern noted in 1916 about rising costs. This was the year that Rudd had died. In 1919 De Beers Consolidated miners started supporting the hospital and in 1920 a memorial to Rudd was unveiled.

Still in London, men such as Lionel Phillips did what they could to support the government in South Africa. Phillips acted as an ambassador and messenger as he travelled between South Africa and London during the war, despite the real threat of ships being torpedoed. One hindrance or difficulty recorded about the magnates at this time concerns Lady Phillips. She was seen to be a 'trouble maker' and to stir up issues between the English and Afrikaans communities. Neither Lionel nor the politicians could contain her and even Lady Buxton was wary of her initiatives asking Lord Gladstone for advice on how to deal with her.¹³ Despite this, she was very involved, as were the other mining magnate wives, in organising war comforts for the South African officers and men fighting in Europe.

¹² Leo Weinthal, *The story of the Cape to Cairo Railway and River Route, from 1887 to 1922* vol 1 (Pioneer, London, 1923) p187-8

¹³ British Library: Gladstone ADD 46082 f37, 31 Oct 1916

Phillips opened a wing of his house in the UK to serve as a hospital and, following the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, took over the Central Mining and Investment Company during the war due to necessity when three leading directors, Max Francke, Louis Reyersback and Frederick Ekstein, were forced to resign having been born in Germany.

In 1916, Phillips visited South Africa to see how business was developing there and after his return to England, he became controller of the Department of Mineral Resources under the Minister of Munitions, Lloyd George, and also served on the Marquis of Crewe's Committee on Petroleum.¹⁴ It seems appropriate to sidetrack here and mention that the Marquis' brother, Charles Preston Crewe, owned a newspaper in East London, was responsible for recruitment in South Africa, alongside Bailey, and led a contingent in German East Africa under General Smuts. Crewe was responsible for the force which marched on Tabora, but was outmanoeuvred by the Belgians who reached the town first. The Belgians had been concerned that the South Africans would use the war to try and obtain their copper rich Katanga area. Crewe was friends with Chaplin, Jameson and Phillips, amongst others, communicating regularly with them during the war.

JB Taylor otherwise known as 'Lucky Jim', although having left the mining world in 1894 and having moved to England, was still involved in the land of his birth. On the outbreak of war, he was asked to join Lord Gladstone's committee set up to look after South African contingents sent to England. Here he worked alongside Otto Beit (brother of Alfred), Jameson and Lord Kilsant, who was also known as Owen Philipps, owner of Union Castle Line amongst other shipping companies. (He lost 100 requisitioned ships during the war.)¹⁵ In 1917 Taylor visited South Africa with his daughter which encouraged him to resettle in the country. This move left the committee of the Peel House Club, for use by Dominion soldiers, without a chairman. His son served in France and afterwards moved to South Africa where he became a leading fruit farmer.¹⁶

Otto Beit of Wehrner, Beit and Co, a naturalised British citizen of German origin spent most of the war years in London, participating and co-ordinating the members of Gladstone's South Africa committee, including Taylor, Phillips and Jameson, and overseeing the design of a memorial to the South African soldiers for Richmond Park where a hospital had been built for the South African forces.

The hospital which initially had 300 beds was begun in March 1916 and opened in June of that year. It was administered by the London District Medical Services and staffed by 13 South African Medical

¹⁴ Lionel Phillips, *Some reminiscences* (1923, reprinted 2011)

¹⁵ www.gracesguide.co.uk

¹⁶ JB Taylor, *Lucky Jim: Memoirs of a Randlord* (reprint 2003); British Library: Gladstone papers

Corps officers, 11 civilian doctors and nurses from the QAIMNS Reserve and South African Military Nursing Services. It was also the base for the 423 men who reinforced No 1 South African General Hospital and No 1 South African Field Ambulance in France. Lady Phillips organised the comforts until the Red Cross took this over and occupational work was available for those recuperating. In September 1916, following a substantial donation by Beit, a further 200 beds were added and an appeal set up which resulted in over 500 additional beds being sourced. In February 1917, a vocational training school was set up for the permanently disabled.

By the end of October 1918, the hospital had treated 274 officers and 9,142 other ranks of which 7,058 were members of the South African contingent. Three hundred and ninety three men were trained at the vocational training college before the hospital closed in 1921 and was demolished in 1925.¹⁷

Following George Farrar's death, his children entered into communications with Patrick Duncan, the executor of the estate and later South African Governor General. Farrar's young daughter, Helen, appears to have taken the loss of her father extremely badly given the contents of her letters to Duncan, however, in a letter dated 7 December 1916, she had found a new purpose – supporting the hospital and, together with Lady Phillips, was setting up a social club for South African Officers at 48 Grosvenor Square.¹⁸ (The Gladstone committee seemed to have control of the buildings from 30-48 Grosvenor Square which were used for supporting the South African troops.)

Beit was awarded the Order of Merit of 2nd Class or the Knight's Commanders Most Distinguished Order for his services to the Empire during the Great War.

Central to the role of the mining magnates in London was Viscount Gladstone who had relinquished his role as Governor General in July 1914. In England, he chaired the Belgian Refugee Committee but also supported South African initiatives. In this role, he oversaw the development of the South African Hospital for troops and co-ordinated the committee to oversee the South African contingents' comforts. He corresponded with a number of South Africans during the war and so was able to keep a finger on the pulse and provide advice when asked.

Back in South Africa, the mines in the Transvaal produced record quantities of gold on reduced manpower, yet the only recorded strikes on the mines during the war years were at JB Robinson's mines at Randfontein in 1915/6 and in 1918 by black miners across the industry.¹⁹ As with many of

¹⁷ *Lost hospitals of London* (www.ezitis.myzen.co.uk/southafrican.html)

¹⁸ UCT: Duncan BC294

¹⁹ Andrew Hocking, *Oppenheimer and Son* (1973) p96

the magnates, Robinson was in England when war was declared. This should not be too surprising, though, as many expats would return to England over the British summer due to monsoons and poor weather elsewhere. (This accounts for many senior military officials, including Kitchener, being in the UK in early August). Two of Robinson's daughters were however in Germany on the outbreak of war and had to negotiate their way back to England which they eventually did. Robinson, with his son Joey and two daughters left for South Africa in February 1915 leaving Mrs Robinson in England where she objected to the Admiralty commandeering the family yacht. Robinson promised Botha £8,000 to support the campaign in German South West Africa, being £5,000 from himself personally and £3,000 from the Robinson Group of Mines. He also offered to serve with Botha in German South West Africa. It is unclear whether any of this promise materialised as Robinson arrived in South Africa shortly before the campaign in German South West was over. He further promised a sum of money to send 40,000-50,000 South Africans to help Britain. This would equate to £100,000 to help fund the difference between the Imperial and Union rates of pay. However, this offer was conditional upon his rival, Abe Bailey and other magnates contributing to a total of £400,000. Bailey and Joey Robinson were MPs for Randburg and Klerksdorp respectively. Nothing seems to have come of this political endeavour by Robinson, although Bailey did eventually send men (still to be confirmed which) to Europe at his own expense.²⁰

Randfontein is recorded as being the only mine which did not pay active service allowances until the company was bought by Solly Joel and Johnnies (Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company) in 1917. Despite this, about 700 men served in all theatres of whom 52 lost their lives, 69 were wounded and 20 taken prisoner.²¹ Between them, they won three Military Crosses, four Distinguished Conduct Medals, eight Military Medals, one Russian Cross, and three Croix de Guerre. Johnnies founder and Director from 1911-1920, Gustav Imroth, who had been born in Germany, saw his son Leslie die from wounds on 7 November 1918 in Johannesburg having served in the 11th Hampshire Regiment.²² Gold Fields which had released 952 men in Johannesburg and 100 in London continued to invest in extending mines and discovering new reefs: a position which was to help South Africa after the war. The other mines, too, continued to invest in developing the mines during the war years despite the increased costs.

When war was declared, Percy Fitzpatrick and his family were in England, Fitzpatrick having returned a month earlier from a German spa where he was undergoing treatment for diabetes. Louis Botha

²⁰ Jeremy Lawrence, *Buccaneer: A biography of Sir Joseph Benjamin Robinson, 1st Baronet* (2nd ed) (Gryphon Press, Rondebosch, 2008); Subsequent thanks to Peter Digby for letting me know it was the Sharpshooters.

²¹ Andrew Hocking, *Oppenheimer and Son* (1973) p98

²² Commonwealth War Graves Commission

had come even closer to being a German prisoner of war as he was due to catch a German boat back to South Africa following a visit to Southern Rhodesia three days before war was declared. Having been warned of unrest in Europe, he changed his mind and returned to South Africa over land. On hearing of the war, Fitzpatrick approached Lord Milner and Lord Kitchener at the War Office for advice on how he could help. Both men recommended that he return to South Africa to support the government there in supporting the Empire, which he did on 2 September 1914. This must have been quite a challenge for Fitzpatrick initially as, apart from having been one of those sentenced to death for his involvement in the Jameson Raid, he and Botha had clashed over Botha's parliamentary seat in Pretoria West in the 1910 elections. Fitzpatrick's faith in the South African Party government was not strong, however, he was soon won over by the support Botha and Smuts were giving the Empire and it is recorded that he never again doubted the loyalty of the two Boer statesmen – comments which could only have reassured those in London who had doubts about how loyal their newest dominion would be in this time of need.

His work on the Sunday's River project continued and in 1917 he obtained permission for a dam to be built on the river. He also introduced Hume pipes from New Zealand which were to prove of great value to the mining world as well and when Standard Bank called up the loans on his project, his mining friends stepped into bail him out - again, ensuring the mining magnates played a significant role in part of South Africa's economic development during the war. When peace was announced, Fitzpatrick left for England to promote his Hume pipes and to recruit settlers for his Sunday's River project. His biggest and most lasting contribution has been the post-war two-minute silence we now have on 11 November every year at 11am. He suggested this to *The Times* newspaper which informed him that it was logistically impossible. However, on advice from his wife, he then wrote to Lord Milner who discussed it with Lord Curzon explaining that in South Africa, a three-minute silence was held every day during the war. This happened irrespective of where people were – in factories, offices, at home or on the street. At a given signal, everything came to a standstill. He felt this would be a fitting way to remember or give thanks for what one had experienced during the war. It would be inclusive of all religious beliefs as it was a personal, quiet time. Curzon mentioned this to the king, who liked it and suggested it be implemented. Fitzpatrick learnt of this on his arrival in the United States on 12 November 1919 when he saw the newspaper headlines.

Then there is William Dalrymple of Anglo-French Exploration Company which formed part of ERPM. Dalrymple, who had formed the Johannesburg Caledonian Society and helped raise the South African Scottish Horse before World War One played an active part in recruiting the South African Scottish, made up of the Transvaal Scottish and Cape Town Highlanders, which saw service in the

1914-18 war as part of the 4th Regiment in France.²³ He visited the regiment, which wore the Atholl Murray tartan, in France and is recorded as 'maintaining a deep interest in the welfare of the men and their dependents'.²⁴ He was also to see service in German East Africa and Egypt, although was in South Africa on 25 November 1915 when he laid the cornerstone of the Presbyterian Church in Boksburg where many of the Scots working at ERPM worshiped.

Although not a mining magnate as such, Frederick Creswell had been General Manager of the Village Main Reef Mine until 1903. He resigned from his mining role to campaign for the removal of Chinese labourers on the mines and from 1910, led the South African Labour Party which he had formed. On the other side of the employee/employer line, he supported the South African war effort, first in German South West Africa and then in command of the 8th South African Infantry from 1916 to 1917 in German East Africa. Having in effect joined forces with the mining leadership for the duration of the First World War, he was to split from them again, supporting the 1922 miner's strike.²⁵

So far, this paper has suggested that all was relatively well and that the relationship between the government and the mining magnates was good. However, there is another side which should be mentioned and explored: those magnates who did not openly appear to actively support their government during this time of need. The first name here which comes to mind is that of Oppenheimer but initially information was not as easily obtainable as for other magnates at this time. Given the standing of the family in South African history, it appeared odd that information was scarce, leading to the conclusion that the family had suffered as a result of the anti-German actions which erupted in South Africa. This proved to be the case and, apart from the Oppenheimers, a few others – despite having assumed British nationality years before the outbreak of war – were also to suffer as a result of having been born in Germany. These include Max Franke, Frederick Eckstein and Louis Reyersbach who had to resign their directorships in Consolidated Mines.

George Albu of General Mining, who remained in London during the war, only returning to South Africa in 1921, turned his house in Grosvenor Place into a hospital and seen both his son and daughters serve on the Western Front. Albu's brother in law, Hans Rosendorff, who had not changed his German papers was forced to leave Johannesburg in 1915 following the sinking of the Lusitania. He went to Portuguese East Africa, now Mozambique, where he was placed in an internment camp.

²³ http://www.1914-1918.net/south_africa.html

²⁴ HSRC, *Dictionary of South African biography*, Vol 2, p 157, 1972

²⁵ M Creswell, *An epoch of the political history of South Africa in the life of Frederick Hugh Page Creswell* (Cape Town) D Ticktin, 'The war issue and the collapse of the SALP, 1914-1915' in *South African Historical Journal*, No 1, Nov 1969; http://sun025.sun.ac.uk/portal/page/Arts/Departmetel/geskiedenis/docs/exporting_trade_unionism.pdf

Albu negotiated his release and Rosendorff returned to Johannesburg where he remained on parole. Albu then did the same for another two 'better class of German subject'.²⁶

The company A Goerz & Co provides a classic example of the confusion and complexity of relationships at the time and is an area rich for further study. Before looking at the company, it might be of interest to note that of the 25 entrepreneurs involved in SA gold mining at the outbreak of war 11 were German or Austrian, including nine Jewish. A Goerz & Co had close links with Deutsche Bank and although operations had been suspended at Cinderella Deep before war broke out, discussions were under way with Deutsche Bank re financing. On 1 August 1914, the bank approved a loan for the company despite the European war having started on 28 July 1914. On Sunday 3 August 1914, the day before Britain declared war on bank holiday 4 August, the company agreed financing for Modder Deep which came into operation in January 1915. In London, the company had five of its six German born employees interned or deported whilst Hans Neuhaus changed his name to Henry Newhouse in order to avoid any conflict and Henry Strakosch, a manager noted that he would do nothing 'which can be misconstrued by the authorities'.²⁷

The offices of both General Mining and A Goerz & Co were attacked in London with General Mining suffering more. As part of the law governing alien ownership of companies in South Africa during the war, both General Mining and A Goerz & Co could be sold – General Mining having a 48% German shareholding and A Goerz & Co a 55% German shareholding. However, Strakosch was able to convince Smuts not to put the companies up for open tender and they were saved, Goerz & Co changing its name to Union Corporation Ltd after the war.

Back in South Africa, at the outbreak of war, Ernest Oppenheimer was ending his second term as Mayor of Kimberley and had no intention of standing again. However, he was persuaded by his fellow counsellors to do so. Although unanimously asked to stand, when it came to the public vote, one of his fellow counsellors, Fred Hick, asked that Oppenheimer stand down for moral reasons, as the mayor of Bloemfontein had, and refused to nominate another candidate. Following a somewhat heated debate, Oppenheimer reluctantly accepted the position of Mayor for a third term. One of his first acts was to arrange the sending off of the Kimberley Regiment for service in German South West, was involved in forming the Kimberley Rifle Association and personally gave ten horses to those in need in the formation of the South African Horse which was to be recruited by Colonel Byron. De Beers, under the directorship of Francis Oates, also offered horses. Soon after, Ernest was to fight for the raising of a second Kimberley Regiment rather than having to liaise with

²⁶ JFD Jones, *Through fortress and rock: the story of Gencor 1895-1995* (Jonathan Ball, 1995) p69

²⁷ *Ibid.* p21

Bloemfontein over the raising of 700 men. Botha, in making his request, had ignored the tensions between the English-dominated and Boer-dominated towns, or was this part of his drive to unite English and Afrikaans speaker? As with the 2nd Battalion of the Kimberley Regiment commanded by Colonel Thomas Rose and Colonel David Harris, which Oppenheimer had helped raise and finance, recruitment for the new regiment was also undertaken by Oppenheimer and he lobbied Cape Town. He raised four companies totalling 517 men of all ranks. They were trained locally together with 100 men from Bloemfontein and a contingent from Mafeking. Oppenheimer took a personal interest in the troops arranging for parcels and individual letters being sent to the Kimberley men. Working with De Beers, he set up the Mayor's War Relief Fund which supported 250 white and 350 black men who were unemployed and prepared to work for support. He also encouraged firms not to retrench people but rather to reduce salaries to provide some support. Kimberley had been hard hit with the outbreak of war as diamonds were purely a luxury item and so suffered first when the economy was affected.

The pressure on Oppenheimer to resign continued but he held fast until actions resulting from the sinking of the *Lusitania* put his family at risk. Following riots in Kimberley in which his offices were targeted and threats against his and other naturalised German homes, he resigned and sent his family to Cape Town. His final act as mayor was to congratulate Botha on 12 May 1915 on his taking of German South West Africa. In Cape Town, he became frustrated as there was nothing for him to do and moving back to Kimberley or even Johannesburg was out of the question due to the anti-German feeling which was prevalent. He therefore took his family to London where the rest of the Oppenheimer family was based and although there were anti-German outbursts, they were not as virulent by all accounts as those in South Africa.

Of his brothers, Otto served on the Western Front together with Leslie Pollock, his wife May's brother, whilst Bernard, who was with Lewis and Marks (of Sammy Marks fame) and Premier Mines,²⁸ organised the building of a munitions factory in Hertfordshire which employed 3,000 mainly Belgian refugees. By 1916, they were producing 10,000 shells a day – leading Lord Kitchener to say, 'If we only had a half-dozen Bernard Oppenheimers there could never be a shell shortage at the Western Front.'²⁹ In July 1917, Bernard started training disabled soldiers in diamond cutting in Brighton, opening the Bernard Oppenheimer Diamond Works on 1 April 1918. Education was important to the Oppenheimers given the newspaper cuttings and election posters available and today, Ernest's house, 7 Lodge Street, in Kimberley is a vocational training centre for the hospitality industry. When news came through in late 1915 that South Africa was to send men to East Africa,

²⁸ Edward Jessup, *Ernest Oppenheimer: a study in power* (Rex Collings, London 1979) p50

²⁹ Andrew Hocking, *Oppenheimer and sons* (1973) p69

Bernard offered £100 to the first four men to win the Victoria Cross and £50 to the first four to receive the Distinguished Service Order. Only one South African, Captain WA Bloomfield, won a VC in East Africa in August 1916 at Mlali whilst 62 DSOs were awarded. Sergeant FC Booth of the BSAP Company also won a VC in 1917 near Songea.

During this time, the Oppenheimer family was having to deal with directors being forced to leave the company due to their German origins which was affecting the running of Consolidated Mines. Ernest, who was missing South Africa, offered to return and see what he could do. He tried selling to Lionel Phillips who was then at Corner House in Johannesburg, but Phillips was unable to help due to the difficulties his own company was facing. Realising that this would be the same for other companies, and following a discussion with mining engineer William Honnold from the US with whom he'd had dealings for years, Ernest decided to take a risk and invest in sinking shafts on the East Rand. He did this in Brakpan and Springs. He returned to London to explain his actions and to raise funds but to little avail. However, his relationship with Honnold paid off and funding was found in the US after Herbert Hoover, a mining engineer himself who had spent some time in South Africa, had lent his support.³⁰ In this he was further assisted by FC Hull who was on the board of Consolidated Mines and had previously been on Botha's cabinet. In 1917, whilst in London, Hull arranged for Ernest to meet with then Deputy Prime Minister Jan Smuts who had left East Africa to attend the Imperial War Cabinet and Council meetings and stayed at the request of his British colleagues. Ernest discussed with Smuts his plans for Consolidated Mines and the involvement of American funding. Reassured that the American financiers were not out for 'quick money', Smuts gave his approval and on 25 September 1917, The Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa came into being. A return trip to South Africa could have seen the end of all Ernest had worked for when the ship he was on (*Galloway Castle*), along with four hundred invalided South African troops, Henry Burton then Minister for Railways and Harbours, was torpedoed on 12 September 1918. However, many were rescued, 154 lives being lost, and on their arrival back in England, Ernest ensured that all those who had been emigrating to South Africa and had lost everything were supported until they could get back on their feet. He reportedly attended the Versailles talks as an observer at the invitation of Smuts. Through information received from Hull and David Graaff, Ernest was able to purchase diamond mines using US funds in South West Africa with Botha's blessing.

Hull, himself, although initially against the invasion of German South West Africa, joined the forces in support of the allied war effort. He joined the 2nd Mounted Brigade with his son, Charles, under

³⁰ Edward Jessup, *Ernest Oppenheimer: a study in power* (Rex Collings, London 1979) pp91-2

Colonel Alberts who landed in Swakopmund. Hull served as one of Botha's administrative officers and for his services was mentioned in despatches in April 1918.³¹

After the war, Ernest Oppenheimer served as Secretary of the South African War Memorial Fund which was chaired by Percy Fitzpatrick, and was one of the last South Africans to be nominated for a knighthood by the South African government. The South Africa War Memorial Fund had been set up to raise money for a memorial to South African forces which had served the Empire. This was a private fund as Smuts felt it inappropriate for the Government to do anything official. It would, however, support as it could. It was at a dinner with Otto Beit in London that Fitzpatrick heard that the farm where the battle for Delville Wood had taken place was for sale. Whilst Fitzpatrick was in the process of negotiating for the land, the South African government decided to become involved, causing the price to rise considerably. The outcome was that South Africa had a piece of land in France on which a memorial to all South Africans who participated in World War One are remembered.

Why have I felt it necessary to offer an insight into the role of the mining magnates during the First World War? Simply, had fate or commonsense not intervened after the Jameson Raid of 1895, most of the people mentioned in this paper would not have been around. Farrar and Phillips in particular, had been sentenced to death or imprisoned for their role in the raid and planned uprising. Now, not even twenty years later they were supporting and working with the very people who had been responsible for their death sentences!

These men were prepared to put aside their differences, many of them MPS and members of the pro-British Unionist Party to ensure Britain won the war and that those South Africans, Afrikaans-speakers, who were willing to support the homeland should be able to do so. Similarly, their employees, also members of the Unionist Party or of the Labour Party, the latter who were anti-capitalism and supporting the newly formed National Party in 1914, put aside their differences to ensure Britain was not hindered in winning the war.

In total, 5553 men from the mines saw active service during the war. Of these, 551 lost their lives. Many more would have enlisted had they been allowed, however their jobs were classified as essential thereby preventing them from joining the armed forces.

Apart from those mentioned already, some of the magnates saw their sons, daughters and other family members volunteer to serve in Europe and other theatres and some made the final sacrifice. Phillips saw one son join the Wits Rifles and fight in German South West Africa before going to

³¹ Virginia Malminas, *Henry Charles Hull (1860-1932): man of many parts*, BA UCT, nd

England, whilst the other joined the Surrey Yeomanry. His son-in-law was killed in 1918. Fitzpatrick lost his son Nugent in December 1917, whilst Alan served in East Africa in charge of the 4th South African Horse. Albu's son, Walter, was sent to serve in German South West Africa and then in France where he joined the Royal Flying Corps. His two daughters served as nurses in Europe and his home at Grosvenor Place was turned into a hospital. He lost his son Walter in 1920 because of a combination of septicaemia, flu and a thrombosis. Otto Beit's son Theodore died in Europe in January 1917. Farrar's brother, Reverend Charles Frederick, went to the Western Front at Flanders to report on the situation there as part of a War Office initiative. In 1917 he joined the staff of the Admiralty Shipyard Labour Department, first in the publications department and later dealing with labour disputes. Farrar's two eldest daughters, too saw service, Murial as a driver in Belgium and Gwendoline as an entertainer, cellist and comedienne.³²

In conclusion, Edward Jessup claims 'the making, or losing, of money was the main pre-occupation of the Rand Lords – the war was far away. Solly Joel summed up the attitude in November 1917 when he told shareholders of De Beers the reasons for closing down the mines: "why sell a million carats for £1m when you can sell five hundred thousand carats for £2m?"'³³ Despite this view, which has become the popularly accepted view of the mining magnates, they made sacrifices to support the government and in their personal capacities did what they could to help the Empire win the war.

³² Barry Imeson, *Playing the man*, p125

³³ Edward Jessup, *Ernest Oppenheimer: a study in power* (Rex Collings, London) 1979, p69