

EINE ANDERE HEIMAT - A DIFFERENT HOME

**A BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICAN GERMANNES,
1864 - 2014**

by

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“Die Erinnerungen ist das einzige Paradies woraus wir nicht vertrieben werden können.”

"Memory is the only paradise we can not be driven from"

- Jean Paul (1763-1825)

(Taken from the notebook of Richard Behrens under the section titled
“Vergänglichkeit, Tod, Trost” - Transience, Death, Solace)

With deep gratitude to

Prof Karen Harris,

my parents, Antony and Gudrun,

and my wife, Ali Lauren.

Contents

Abstract	i
Key Words	i
Abbreviations	ii
Notes on the use of the original German texts	ii
Behrens Family Tree (abridged)	iii
Introduction	
- The title: <i>Eine andere Heimat</i> - A different home	1
- A narrative analysis	2
- A review of the historiography	3
- Mission historiography	3
- 'Secular' German immigration and settlement in South Africa	7
- A German diaspora	12
- An overview of the chapters and primary source materials	18
- Biography	23
Chapter 1	
<i>Die Hermannsburger Wanderung</i> - The Hermannsburg Migration	30
- German Migrations	31
- Ludwig Harms and the Christian Revival in Hermannsburg	39
- The Hermannsburg Mission Society	44
Chapter 2	
<i>Aufbruch nach Afrika</i> - Departure to Africa 1864-1895	65
- The German Settlements	80
- The Behrens family at <i>Waaikraal</i>	88
Chapter 3	
<i>Das Heimatrecht zu Erwerben</i> - Earning the right to belong 1896-1909	92
- Jameson Raid	92
- South African War	97
- Eviction and detention	104
- Aftermath	110
- The Kroondal School Association	115

Chapter 4	<i>Deutschtum - Germanness</i>	1910-1918	126
	- Nationalism		130
	- The First World War		139
	- Second Generation: Gussy Behrens & Ida Wehrmann		144
Chapter 5	<i>Afrikadeutsche - Germans in Africa</i>	1919-1939	161
	- <i>Pflicht</i> / Duty		162
	- Black African experience of Kroondal - Naboth Mokgatle		167
	- <i>Deutschertag</i> / German Day		176
	- Third Generation: Hugo & Richard Behrens		182
	- Nazism		185
Chapter 6	<i>Solidarität - Solidarity</i>	1939-1945	196
	- Hugo Behrens - A “German” occupation		201
	- Richard Behrens - “ <i>Eine Brotlose Kunst</i> ” / A bread-less art		207
	- Ida Behrens - Black & White Relationships in Kroondal		214
	- Hugo Behrens - Relationships and SWA		219
Chapter 7	<i>Die Pflicht ruft - “Duty Calls”</i>	1945-1952	228
	- Ida Behrens - Duty & DAHA		229
	- Youth Groups & Courtship		237
	- Apartheid & Racial Relations		242
	- <i>Deutsch-Afrikaner</i> / German-Africans		246
Chapter 8	<i>Eine Deutschtumsinsel - An Island of Germanness</i>	1954-1989	254
	- Third Generation: Family and Germany		255
	- 1960: The Reality of Race		259
	- 1960-1970: Questions of Germanness		269
	- Fourth Generation: Germanness & Assimilation		278
	- 1980s: Legacy & Decline		281
Chapter 9	<i>Rückgang - Decline</i>	1990-2014	288
	- A new South Africa		288
	- A last reunion		292
Conclusion			294

Source List	302
i) Archival Sources	302
- Gemeinde / Statistik	302
- DAHA	302
ii) Private Family Collections - Correspondence	303
iii) Private Family Collections - Printed	304
iv) Oral Sources	306
v) Academic Journal Articles	307
vi) Periodicals	311
vii) Literature	311
viii) Papers	323
ix) Internet Sources	323

Abstract

The growth of a distinctive German South African minority that began during the mid-nineteenth century, is closely related to the arrival of German mission societies in the region and the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS) in particular. Influenced by the tide of nineteenth century German emigration, along with sentiments of ethnic German nationalism, the HMS was far more than an agent of Christian evangelism in that it offered the means for a new life abroad without the need to forgo a connection to the “old country” or Heimat. Accordingly, and as with other examples of what has since been dubbed part of the German diaspora, evidence suggests that a significant portion of HMS related immigration to South Africa was representative of a desire for improved opportunities and the promise of the continuation of a traditionally agrarian mode of life. It follows that where the HMS inspired immigration must be regarded as an audacious undertaking, many of those involved in its venture were motivated to do so in pursuit of a conservative goal.

It is within this context that this thesis uses the case study of the Behrens family from Hermannsburg in Germany to address the theme of German immigration, assimilation and identity as it presents itself over four generations of descendants. In doing so, it documents the origins, growth and decline of arguably South Africa’s most prominent German community during the twentieth century, the farming settlement of Kroondal, situated in the present-day North West province. Characterised by the desire to retain its culturally German identity, the community provides a minority perspective of a century and half of South African history, including the South African War, the First and Second World Wars and the Apartheid era. They are events that the thesis narrates through the use of a substantial and largely unpublished collection of Behrens family life histories, autobiographies and written correspondence, together with primary resource materials that have been assembled in the Kroondal church archive. Placed together, they are sources that offer insights into the community's norms regarding gender-roles, racial-relations along with their overall experience of a changing and often challenging South African environment. Ultimately, however, the community’s conservatism worked to divorce it from the increasingly liberal sentiments of the post-war (West) German public which eventually served to erode the self-identification of Kroondal’s Germanness.

Key words:

German diaspora; diasporic identity; Kroondal; Hermannsburg Mission Society; Heimat; South African history; Behrens; immigration; identity; biography; nationalism; Apartheid

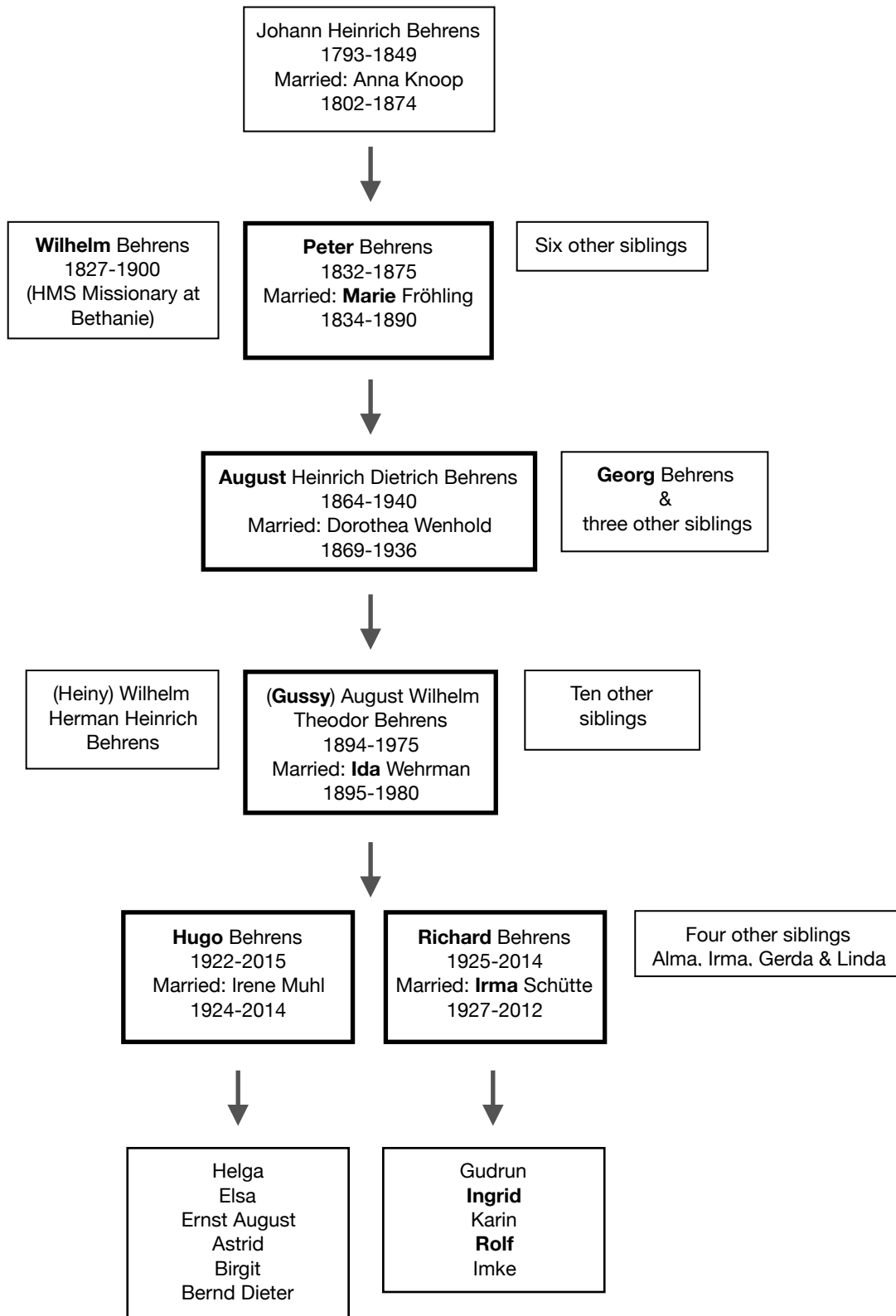
Abbreviations:

ADV	-	<i>Alldeutscher Verband</i>
ANC	-	African National Congress
BDM	-	<i>Bund Deutscher Mädel</i>
BMS	-	Berlin Mission Society
BSAC	-	British South African Company
CNO	-	<i>Christelik Nasionaal Onderwys</i>
DAHA	-	<i>Deutsch-Afrikanischer Hilfsausschuß</i>
DDR	-	<i>Deutsche Demokratische Republik</i>
DJSA	-	<i>Deutsche Jugend Südafrika</i>
DKG	-	<i>Deutscher Kolonialgesellschaft</i>
HMS	-	Hermannsburg Mission Society
NM	-	North German Missionary Society
PAC	-	Pan African Congress
RDM	-	Rand Daily Mail
SAW	-	South African War
VDA	-	<i>Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland</i>

Notes on the use of original German texts

This thesis includes a variety of original German texts that have been taken from manuscripts, letters and diaries, dating back to the nineteenth century and, as such, reflects differences in spelling conventions. Likewise, the influence of English and Afrikaans on the German language of isolated communities such as those in South Africa is evident in a number of sources. Therefore, while the attempt has been made to present each quote as accurately as possible, the thesis does not indicate where the language used in these quotes differs from present-day High German. Furthermore, in some instances the clarity of handwritten sources has created the potential for an ambiguous interpretation.

Behrens Family Tree (abridged)



The names of those individuals whose lives form part of the central narrative of this thesis have been highlighted in bold.

Introduction

The title: *Eine andere Heimat - A different home*

The German idea of *Heimat*, as a sense of spatial belonging and nostalgia, has retained a prominent, though at times troublesome place in the German language for much of its modern history. It is a concept that unlike the more literal *Heim* or home, upon which it is based, can be understood as the idealised association to the memory of an 'original' landscape or place. When seen as such, *Heimat* represents a form of identity in the same way that an older individual might reminisce about the *Heimat* (place) of his or her youth, and it is in this sense that *Heimat* is almost always associated with some form of loss.¹

The title "*Eine andere Heimat*" and its disambiguation "A different home", point to questions of spatial, communal, cultural and national identity as central themes in the process of German settlement and assimilation in South Africa. They are themes that this study approaches through the inter-generational narrative of the Behrens family, from the birth of its forebears in Germany in 1864 to its present-day culmination in South Africa in the lives of his grandsons Richard and Hugo Behrens.

Accordingly, while the timeframe for the research remains focused on the 150-year period that thereby encompasses the lives of almost four generations of the Behrens family, the thesis will at times extend beyond this periodisation to afford the necessary context to events that remain significant to its investigation.

The inspiration for the study along with that of its title, "*Eine andere Heimat*", is largely derived from the work of the German film-maker Edgar Reitz whose motion picture, "*Die andere Heimat*" or "Home from Home" was released in 2014 to critical acclaim from German and international audiences alike.² It is a film that served as a prequel to Reitz's original success with the made-for-television series "*Heimat*", regarding the fictitious account of a rural German family in south western Germany.³ However, where the initial "*Heimat*" series traces the narrative of the family over the greater part of the twentieth century, it is in his film, "*Die andere Heimat*", that Reitz decided to precede the story of the original series with a narrative from the same

¹ P. Blicke, *Heimat. A Critical Theory of the German idea of Homeland*. 2002. pp. 1, 3, 6.

² P. Oltermann, "Die Andere Heimat: Edgar Reitz's epic German drama gets a cinematic prequel". *The Guardian*. (2013-10-1). <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/01/die-andere-heimat-film-edgar-reitz>>. Access: 2015-09-21.

³ E. Reitz, *Heimat. Eine Chronik in Bildern*. 1985.

family almost a century earlier in 1840. What follows is an account of a time in Germany's past when the combination of environmental and political factors persuaded millions of its inhabitants to leave their homeland in search of a better life in the European colonies.⁴ It is within this context that Reitz's film serves as a depiction of an era in German history that for many, necessitated the choice between that of an old and a new *Heimat*.

When compared to the title of Reitz's film that can be translated (directly) as "The other home", this study's title "*Eine andere Heimat*" can instead be read as "A different home". While these may only appear as subtle changes in their articles, especially to a non-German speaker, the differentiation does represent an important distinction regarding this study's research into a "different" area of (South African) Germanness that, thereby, also aims to acknowledge the diverse extent of German immigration and identity around the world. It is with these distinctions in mind that the inherent similarity of this thesis's title to that of Reitz's work nevertheless aims to evoke its own particular association to the theme of a biographical narrative as it relates to the intergenerational identity of Germanness in South Africa.

A narrative analysis

The decision to approach this thesis as a narrative takes cognisance of the views of the acclaimed American historian, Gordon S. Wood, as presented in his article, "In Defense of Academic History Writing", featured in the magazine of the American Historical Association in 2010.⁵ It is an article in which Wood offers a critique on the state of the discipline that he argues, has become increasingly inaccessible due to the steady narrowing of its analytical monographs. While Wood is careful to acknowledge the contributions of such specialised historiography, he maintains that the need for chronological narratives should be viewed as being just as important to the maintenance of historical writing as a whole. It follows that this thesis takes the approach of a narrative analysis with which to portray the evolution of a German identity in South Africa.

⁴ P. Oltermann, "Die Andere Heimat: Edgar Reitz's epic German drama gets a cinematic prequel". *The Guardian*. (2013-10-1). <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/01/die-andere-heimat-film-edgar-reitz>>. Access: 2015-09-21.

⁵ G. S. Wood, "In Defense of Academic History Writing". *Perspectives on History. The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association*. 2010. <<https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/april-2010/in-defense-of-academic-history-writing>>. Access: 2015-09-24.

A Review of the Historiography

It would be naive to suggest that the idea of South African Germanness can be represented in any singular form, even if “it” appears to have maintained a remarkable degree of resilience over the last one and a half centuries. Instead, the history of German immigration to South Africa, that spans virtually the entire length of European settlement in the region, should more accurately be considered a collection of histories rather than any single history per se.⁶ In this respect, those communities that are typically considered to be German-South African today are representative of only one segment of German settlement in the region that for a variety of reasons, chose to resist the pressures of assimilation over successive generations. They are the communities that, for the most part, were formed in close association to German protestant mission organisations whose presence in the South African region began to take prominence over the mid-nineteenth century. Yet, even for those (German South African) communities not founded in relation to these organisations, their incorporation into one of a number of German Lutheran church synods meant that the vast majority of German South African communities founded during this time came to be characterised by their identification to Lutheran institutions.⁷ Seen from this perspective, it is hardly surprising that the bulk of academic research into the area of German immigration and settlement to South Africa has, likewise, been directed towards the field of mission and church history. In comparison, the collection of published material that addresses the history of secular German settlement in South Africa is still largely underrepresented in the country’s historiography.⁸

Mission historiography

Where mission history has emerged as a specific focal point in the study of German immigration and settlement in South Africa, its prevalence has undoubtedly been fuelled by the archival source materials available to historians entering this domain.

⁶ G. C. de Wet, *Die Duitsers aan die Kaap in 1692*, *Lantern*. Special Edition: The German Contribution to the Development of SA. Feb 1992. p. 16; K. Bauch & A. Mertens, *Deutsche Kultur am Kap*, 1964. pp. 16-17.

⁷ R. Ottermann, *The Centenary of the Synod 1895-1995*. 1995. pp.12-16.; A. Peters, “The Bergtheil Settlers 1847/48”. *Lantern*. Special Edition: The German Contribution to the Development of SA. Feb 1992. p. 119.

⁸ H. Lessing, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. 2011. pp. 34-35.

Identified by scholars such as Colin Bundy⁹ and Ulrich van Heyden,¹⁰ missionary archives represent an important (even if biased) record of social interaction in South Africa's history that is otherwise often not represented in other primary sources of the time.¹¹ Here, it has been research into two of the most prominent of these mission organisations, the Berlin Mission Society (BMS) and the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS) that has been responsible for the majority of publications pertaining to German history in South Africa.¹² Yet, it was the HMS that arguably proved to have the most distinctive impact upon the nature of German settlement in the region,¹³ that thereby also included a direct impact upon those individuals and communities that form the primary focus of this study.

Begun in the German village of its namesake, the HMS was the initiative of the unorthodox pastor and evangelist, Ludwig Harms, who recruited north German peasants to effect his vision of a Christian mission to Africa. It is a narrative that, when surveying the available literature, has been well documented by historians including a significant number of authors who have had direct ties to the HMS itself.¹⁴ Of these, the voluminous compilations of two of its former directors, Georg Haccius¹⁵ and Ernst-August Lüdemann¹⁶ provide important annals, even if they were produced almost a century apart. In turn, the names of other mission historians such as Reinhart Müller, Wolfgang Bienert and Ernst Schering should be included as prominent contributors over the 1980s and 1990s. Noting, however, that these generally addressed the organisational history of the HMS, rather than the case studies of its missionaries around the world.¹⁷ In contrast it has become the preserve of other authors, with more specific interests in the HMS's history in South and southern Africa, to produce a range of books and publications on this topic over the last thirty years. Among the most influential of these studies are the dissertations of

⁹ C. Bundy. *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*. 1979. p. vii.

¹⁰ U. van der Heyden, "German Mission Archives and the Political History of South Africa". *Missionalia*. 31:2 (August 2003). p. 336-341.

¹¹ C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*. 1979. p. vii.

¹² H. Winkler, *The Divided Roots of Lutheranism in South Africa. A Critical Overview of the Social History of the German-speaking Lutheran Missions and the Churches Originating from their Work in South Africa*. (Masters Dissertation) University of Cape Town. 1989. p. 10.

¹³ W. Schellack, "Nalatenskap van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap" *Lantern*. Feb. 1992. p. 55.

¹⁴ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsburger Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1880-1939*. 1988. p. 15

¹⁵ G. Haccius, *Hannoversche Missionsgeschichte*. Vol. I (1905) Vol. II (1907) Vol. III (1914).

¹⁶ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000.

¹⁷ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 123-125.

Fritz Hasselhorn under the title, *Bauernmission in Südafrika*¹⁸ ('Farmer's Mission in South Africa') (1988) and Heinrich Bamman's *Inkulturation des Evangeliums unter den Batswana in Transvaal/Südafrika*¹⁹ ('Inculturation of the Gospel among the Batswana in Transvaal/South Africa') (2002). Of these, it is Hasselhorn's overview on the HMS's experience of the changing political circumstances in South Africa between 1890 and 1939 that serves as an excellent companion for researchers entering into this field. In turn, Bamman's thesis along with his authorship of two more recent books, *The Bafokeng* (2014) and *The Bahurutse* (2016), provide examples of the inherent usefulness that mission archives present in supplementing the otherwise often marginalised history of Black²⁰ South African communities.²¹ Supporting this stance is historian Kirsten Rütter with the book, *The Power Beyond*²² along with her more recent article, "Through the Eyes of Missionaries and the Archives they created" in which she also reiterates the need for caution in the use of mission records that carry the underlying social and ideological biases of their authors.²³

While the list of published sources regarding the influence of the HMS in southern Africa continues to grow, there are certain aspects of this research that warrant further mention for the purposes of this introduction. These include a growing degree of interest in gender studies as it relates to mission archives, represented by books such as Jobst Reller's *Die Mission ist weiblich*²⁴ ('The Mission is female') (2012), articles such as Lize Kriel's *A German-Christian Network of Letters in Colonial Africa as a Repository for 'Ordinary' Biographies of Women, 1931–1967*,²⁵ along with new explorations into the complexities of the HMS's involvement in policies of Apartheid

¹⁸ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsburger Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1880-1939*. 1988.

¹⁹ H. Bamman, *Inkulturation des Evangeliums unter den Batswana in Transvaal / Südafrika - Am Beispiel der Arbeit von Vätern und Söhnen der Hermannsburger Mission von 1857-1940*. (Doctoral Thesis) University of South Africa.

²⁰ In the context of this thesis, the word "Black" is used to refer to the collective group of Bantu-speaking descendants who are at times also referred to as the "Black African" population.

²¹ H. Bamman, *The Bafokeng: History and Culture (Traditional and Christian) in Perspective from Their First Three Hermannsburg Missionaries Until 1940*. 2014; H. Bamman, *The Bafokeng: Historical Events, Culture and Religion (Traditional and Christian) in Dinokana/South Africa from 1857 to 1940*. 2016.

²² K. Rütter, *The Power Beyond: Mission Strategies, African Conversion and the Development of a Christian Culture in the Transvaal*. 2002.

²³ K. Rütter, "Through the Eyes of Missionaries and the Archives They Created". *Journal of Southern African Studies*. Vol. 38. 2012. p. 369.

²⁴ J. Reller, *Die Mission ist weiblich. Frauen in der frühen Hermannsburger Mission*. 2012.

²⁵ L. Kriel, "A German-Christian Network of Letters in Colonial Africa as a Repository for 'Ordinary' Biographies of Women, 1931". *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 38, Number 3. 2012.

as seen in Linda Chisholm's publication, *Between Worlds: German Missionaries and the Transition from Mission to Bantu Education in South Africa*, (2017).²⁶

Another area of interest is the small collection of historiography by various southern African scholars addressing the influence of the HMS on Tswana and Zulu communities, including research by Radikobo Ntsimane²⁷ on the influence of the Lutheran church on African societies; Thlabane Ranamane's research²⁸ into the HMS's influence on the Tswana language; and Bongani Kashelemba Zulu's thesis on the interactions of the HMS with the inhabitants of northern Zululand.²⁹ While these examples offer important elements in developing a multi-cultural perspective of the HMS, the legacy of the organisation's conservatism regarding race and inter-racial relations has generally been acknowledged by most of the recent scholarship. Among these, it is Harald Winkler's thesis, *The Divided Roots of Lutheranism in South Africa* (1989), that well enunciates both the origins and legacy of the HMS's doctrines of racial and cultural separation. It is an attribute that Winkler explains, had been based upon the HMS's belief in the separation of peoples into *Volkskirchen* or "ethnic churches", as opposed to their amalgamation into inter-ethnic Lutheran congregations.³⁰

Adding to this research is the publication of a more recent book, *Auf getrennten Wegen. Lutherische Missions- und Siedlergemeinden in Südafrika im Spannungsfeld der Rassentrennung (1652-1910)*, (On divergent paths. Lutheran Missions and settler communities in South Africa in the context of segregation and racial tensions') by Christian Hohmann.³¹ Yet, where Hohmann's book does address important aspects of the German South African settler community, particularly with regard to the racial relations of the Lutheran missionaries, its timeframe remains limited by the

²⁶ L. Chisholm, *Between Two Worlds: German Missionaries and the Transition from Mission to Bantu Education in South Africa*. 2017.

²⁷ R. Ntsimane, "The fragile identity of being Lutheran and African: the vulnerability of confessional Lutheran seminaries in Africa today". *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, October 2010. Vol. 36 (2), pp. 219-235.

²⁸ T. Ranamane, "The contribution of the missionaries to the development of Setswana as a written language". *South African Journal of African Languages*. Vol. 32, 2012. pp. 27-33.

²⁹ B. Zulu, *From the Lüneburger Heide to Northern Zululand. A History of the encounter between the Settlers, the Hermannsburg Missionaries, the Amakhosi and their people, with special reference to four mission stations in Northern Zululand (1860-1912)*. (Masters Dissertation) University of Natal. 2002.

³⁰ H. Winkler, *The Divided Roots of Lutheranism in South Africa. A Critical Overview of the Social History of the German-speaking Lutheran Missions and the Churches Originating from their Work in South Africa*. (Masters Dissertation) University of Cape Town. 1989. p. 10.

³¹ C. Hohmann, *Auf getrennten Wegen. Lutherische Missions- und Siedlergemeinden in Südafrika im Spannungsfeld der Rassentrennung (1652-1910)*. 2011.

fact that it does not extend beyond 1910. Similarly, Winkler's research remains restricted to the development of (racially determined) Lutheran church doctrine in South Africa. In spite of these constraints, both Winkler and Hohmann's work must be regarded as important considerations relating to this thesis's investigation into the associated conservatism of the secular German South African Lutheran community.³²

'Secular' German immigration and settlement in South Africa

The beginning of (secular) German immigration to South Africa has been linked to the establishment of the first European settlements on the subcontinent. It is an influence that, while taking cognisance of the inherent lack of a singular German political entity before 1871, has seen brief acknowledgement in much of South Africa's traditional historiography.³³ While the majority of these initial "German" arrivals were soon assimilated into Dutch (and thereby eventually also Afrikaner) society,³⁴ the rise of German nationalism over the nineteenth century appears to have played some part in stemming this trend. What is obvious, however, is that where German immigration to the region during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was generally characterised by the arrival of individuals, the nineteenth century witnessed the influx of various groups who purposefully chose to establish themselves as German communities.³⁵ These included initiatives by the British Colonial Office to settle north German farmers in the sandy flats around Cape Town between 1877 and 1883, along with the arrival of segments of the disbanded British-German Legion on the Eastern Cape frontier some two decades before.³⁶ Similarly, a private enterprise of German cotton farmers, also known as the Bergtheil settlers, had been established in the Natal Colony in 1847.³⁷ Where these histories have been given some measure of attention in the aforementioned traditional historiography, little regard has been shown towards them in more recent examples

³² H. Lessing, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. 2011. p. 34.

³³ G.M. Theal, *History of South Africa. Vol. IV*. 1964. pp. 351-353.; T. R. H. Davenport, *South Africa. A Modern History*. 2000. pp. 22, 142; C. F. J. Muller, *Vyfhonderd Jaar Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*. 1968. pp. 200-201; H. J. van Aswegen, *History of South Africa to 1854*. pp. 77-79, 175; F.A. van Jaarsveld, *From Van Riebeeck to Vorster 1652-1974*. 1975. pp. 12, 35.

³⁴ L. Rabe, 'n Kultuurhistoriese Studie van die Duitse Nedersetting Philippi op die Kaapse Vlakte. (Doctoral Thesis) University of Stellenbosch. 1994. p. 1.

³⁵ G. de Wet, "Die Duitsers aan die Kaap in 1692". *Lantern*. Special Edition: The German Contribution to the Development of SA. Feb. 1992. p. 16.

³⁶ L. Rabe, 'Bete und Arbeite' *The Philippi Germans and their Story*. 2010. p. 12; A. Peters, "The Bergtheil Settlers 1847/48". *Lantern*. Special Edition: The German Contribution to the Development of SA. Feb 1992. pp. 118.

³⁷ A. Peters, "The Bergtheil Settlers 1847/48". *Lantern*. Special Edition: The German Contribution to the Development of SA. Feb. 1992. Pretoria 1992. pp. 119-120.

of historical writing. There is the single exception of a doctoral thesis by Lizette Rabe on the German settlements in the Cape Flat's, and before it, a small number of articles in the previous South African government's cultural journal, *Lantern*, published in 1992.³⁸

In general, however, it was with the arrival of the HMS in Natal in 1854 that the scope of German immigration and settlement in South Africa received its most sustained impetus. Here it should be noted that the attempt to differentiate between the existence of 'secular' as opposed to 'missionary' immigration is problematic given that the majority of those arriving did so in close, if not direct, association to the HMS, whether they were missionaries in its employ or not. Based on its founder's desire to encourage religious conversions through the practical example of Christian living, the HMS had specifically recruited lay "colonists" to accompany its missionaries in support of their assignment. It followed that besides the arrival of its missionaries, the HMS effectively facilitated the immigration of a substantial number of German colonists and their families that, so doing, established a pattern of migration that would continue even after the official dissolution of this practice a little more than a decade thereafter.³⁹ Therefore, it was from these lay colonists and those descendants of the HMS missionaries who did not become missionaries themselves, that up to twenty 'independent'⁴⁰ German settlements had been established across the Natal and Transvaal regions by the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴¹ This included the community of Kroondal that along with the missionary connections of the Behrens family, forms the central focus of this study.

As such, it should be noted that while the use of the word, 'secular' serves as a convenient distinction between the HMS and the settlements it engendered, the reality of this relationship is not so easily differentiated. And yet, it is precisely with regard to these communities that very little of their history has been recorded in the South African historiography. Perhaps because of the fact that its population was

³⁸ L. Rabe, *'n Kultuurhistoriese Studie van die Duitse Nedersetting Philippi op die Kaapse Vlakte*. (Doctoral Dissertation) University of Stellenbosch. 1994. p. 1; *Lantern, Journal of Knowledge and Culture. Special Edition: The German Contribution to the Development of SA*. Feb. 1992. Pretoria 1992.

³⁹ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 57-58; H. J. Oschadleus, "Lutherans, Germans, Hermannsburgers", *Natalia* 22 (1992). pp. 31-33.

⁴⁰ Communities affiliated to the "Hermannsburg German Lutheran Evangelical Synod of South Africa" that was formed in 1909, and no longer under the direct auspices of the HMS.

⁴¹ Kroondal Archive. *Gemeindestatistik deutsch Evang-Luth Synode*.

quick to adapt itself to the South African norms of homesteaded farming, or simply represented too small a minority amidst larger tensions between British and Boers, Whites and Blacks, its greater community appears to have slipped by all but unnoticed by historians during the last 150 years.⁴² Instead it has been the German South African communities themselves that have shown a strong inclination towards recording their own histories, with the result that German Lutheran Church and community archives tend to represent the single best repositories of such resources.

It is here that one such collection of German South African literary and historical material has recently become available under the title, *Africa Calling. A cultural-history of the Hermannsburg Mission and its descendants in South Africa* (2017), compiled by Udo Küsel.⁴³ Focusing on a range of personal and familial narratives, Küsel's book represents a generally anecdotal, though no less valuable resource to assist further research into this area. This even more so given that its publication has been made available entirely in English, making it accessible to those historians who are not versed in the German language. On the whole, however, there are few other published materials that offer anything more than a brief outline or snippets of information on the history of the broader German South African minority. This includes the existence of short books such as Reino Ottermann's *The Centenary of the Synod 1895-1995*,⁴⁴ and Hildemarie Günewald's *Die Geschichte der Deutschen in Südafrika*,⁴⁵ ('The History of the Germans in South Africa') that both remain somewhat limited in the detail that they choose to convey on their subject. Indeed, the presence of a German population in South Africa is really only addressed as and when it relates to larger events, such as the upheavals of the First and Second World Wars. While this can be extended to include references to German South African involvement in the South African War (1899-1902), in sources such as the diary of the German volunteer, Oskar Hintrager,⁴⁶ most references offer little more than an overview of the community's involvement in the conflict.⁴⁷ Among them

⁴² U. Küsel, *Africa Calling. A cultural-history of the Hermannsburg Mission and its descendants in South Africa*. 2017. p. 3; M. Melck, *The Afrikadeutschen of Kroondal*. 2012. University of Pretoria (Masters Dissertation). p. 16.

⁴³ U. Küsel, *Africa Calling. A cultural-history of the Hermannsburg Mission and its descendants in South Africa*. 2017. p. 3.

⁴⁴ R. Ottermann, *The Centenary of the Synod 1895-1995*. 1995.

⁴⁵ H. Günewald, *Die Geschichte der Deutschen in Südafrika*. 1993.

⁴⁶ J. Oberholster (ed.). "Dagboek van Oskar Hintrager - saam met Christiaan de Wet, Mei tot September 1900". *Christiaan de Wet-annale 2*. 1973. pp. 112-113.

⁴⁷ M. Melck, "Kroondal im Kontext des Südafrikanischen Krieges - Die Beziehungen deutschsprachiger Siedler zu Buren und Afrikanern". *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. (ed. H. Lessing,). 2011. pp. 455-469.

Günewald's *Die Geschichte der Deutschen in Südafrika*,⁴⁸ and the book, *Rustenburg at War* by Lionel Wulfsohn.⁴⁹ In comparison, the events of the First World War have garnered a little more attention, though primarily with regard to the 1915 anti-German riots that took place both in South African cities and major English speaking centres around the world. It is a specific area that has seen articles contributed by Tilman Dederling in 2013 and Louis Grundlingh in 1980.⁵⁰ Here it is Dederling who raises the most pertinent questions regarding the identity (and loyalties) of South African Germans over the course of the First World War that has, thereby, also lent important impetus to this thesis's research into this area - specifically with regard to how German South Africans' interactions "with other sections of South African society may have influenced notions of German (South African) identity".⁵¹ When seen together with another of Dederling's publications on the internment of German civilians during the First World War, this time co-authored with Stefan Manz, this research represents an important voice on the German South African experience of this period⁵²

In comparison to the material that has been compiled regarding the experience of German South Africans during the First World War, the historiography pertaining to the influence of national socialism in South Africa before and during the Second World War has shown itself to have more breadth of research on offer. Among the historians who have produced valuable research in this area are Patrick Furlong with the book, *Between Crown and Swastika*⁵³ (1991) and Albrecht Hagemann with *Südafrika und das "Dritte Reich"* (1989).⁵⁴ Even so, it is notable that neither of these authors devoted more than a few pages to addressing the position of the German South African population during this time. An understandable redaction given that the primary focus of Hagemann's research pertains to the developing relationship between the German and South African states, or as in the case of Furlong, the influence of Nazism on Afrikaner nationalism. While the same could be said of

⁴⁸ H. Günewald, *Die Geschichte der Deutschen in Südafrika*. 1993.

⁴⁹ L. Wulfsohn, *Rustenburg at War*. 1987. pp. 238-250.

⁵⁰ T. Dederling, "Avenging the Lusitania': The Anti-German Riots in South Africa in 1915." *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*. Volume 31, Issue 3, 2013. p. 259; L. W. F. Grundlingh, "n Aspek van Blanke Suid-Afrikaanse Groepsverhoudinge tydens die Eerste Wêreldoorlog: Anti-Duitse Opstande, Mei 1915". *South African Historical Journal* 12. 1980. pp. 65-92.

⁵¹ T. Dederling, "Avenging the Lusitania': The Anti-German Riots in South Africa in 1915." *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*. Volume 31, Issue 3, 2013. p. 259.

⁵² S. Manz & T. Dederling, "Enemy Aliens in Wartime: Civilian Internment in South Africa during World War I". *South African Historical Journal*, 68:4. 2016. pp. 536-556.

⁵³ P. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*. 1991.

⁵⁴ A. Hagemann, *Südafrika und das "Dritte Reich"*. 1989.

another, similar publication from the 1990s, that of Robert Citino's *Germany and the Union of South Africa in the Nazi Period*⁵⁵ (1991), it is Furlong's contribution that must be regarded as the most useful synopsis of Nazism's influence on the South African "German-speaking community" to date.⁵⁶

Where the general historical interest towards (naturalised) German populations in South Africa has remained limited at best, there are two important and relatively recent publications that have gone some way in altering this trend. Compiled under the editorial leadership of historian Hans Lessing and featuring contributions of various collaborating authors, the first book was published in 2011 with the title, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika - Die Rolle der Auslandsarbeit von den Anfängen bis in den 1920er Jahre*⁵⁷ (The German Protestant Church in Colonial Southern Africa: The Impact of Overseas Work from its Beginnings until the 1920s). This was followed in 2015 with a second volume that sought to extend the timeframe of investigations into the era of German national socialism and Apartheid, titled, *Umstrittene Beziehungen Protestantismus zwischen dem südlichen Afrika und Deutschland von den 1930er Jahren bis in die Apartheidzeit*⁵⁸ (Contested Relations: Protestantism between Southern Africa and Germany from the 1930s to the Apartheid Era). With both these books focused upon German protestant church history in southern Africa, the release of this material reinforces the predominance that church and mission historiography has held in the field of German South African history in recent years. Yet, at the same time, both books also offer a reasonable extension of church history to include some limited research into the region's German (protestant) populations. Not surprisingly, the first book includes contributions by many of the same authors already mentioned in this thesis's review. These includes Reino Ottermann with an overview of German settlement in South Africa; a brief exposition of the German South African minority during World War One by Tilman Dederling; appraisals of the German Cape Flats settlements by Lizette Rabe; and a contribution by Fritz Hasselhorn on the racial divisions between White and Black Lutheran communities in Hermannsburg, Natal.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ R. Citino, *Germany and the Union of South Africa in the Nazi Period*. 1991.

⁵⁶ P. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*. 1991. pp. 70-77.

⁵⁷ H. Lessing, et al. (ed), *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika. Die Rolle der Auslandsarbeit von den Anfängen bis in den 1920er Jahre*. 2011.

⁵⁸ H. Lessing, et al. (ed), *Umstrittene Beziehungen Protestantismus zwischen dem südlichen Afrika und Deutschland von den 1930er Jahren bis in die Apartheidzeit*. 2015.

⁵⁹ H. Lessing, et al. (ed), *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. 2011. pp. vii-viii.

In turn, the second and more recent of these two books likewise includes a chapter by Dederling that outlines the broad changes in relationship between Germany and South Africa, beginning in the aftermath of the First World War and extending to the growing (West) German resistance towards South Africa's Apartheid government by the 1970s. However, where other contributions such as Martin Eberhardt's *Deutsche Siedlergemeinschaften im südlichen Afrika und das "Dritte Reich" Hoffnungen - Erwartungen - Herausforderungen* (German Settler Communities in Southern Africa during the "Third Reich". Hopes - Expectations - Challenges) appear to offer the prospect of new research into this area, this and a number of other similar contributions remain restricted to investigations into the former South West Africa and do not extend to investigate the German settlement communities of South Africa itself. It is a trend that Lessing acknowledges in his introduction to the first of these volumes where he explains that even though the history of the German speaking minority of present day Namibia has enjoyed significant scholarly attention, the history of its South African counterpart still represents an area in which the potential for future research is far from being exhausted.⁶⁰ Here it is worth noting that Lessing's forty page introduction to *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika* itself represents a valuable contribution to the historiography through its commentary and interpretation of the research on offer. This includes a variety of observations with relevance to this thesis, including the role of the Lutheran Church as an agent against assimilation and the German South African community's identification with German populations around the world during the 1920s, despite these communities' lack of actual interaction.⁶¹

A German diaspora

One further area in Lessing's introduction that proves especially useful is the brief exposition of migration theory that he and his fellow editors included as part of their study's process. In particular, it is Lessing's stance towards the notion of 'diaspora' as a descriptor for immigrant populations that has a great deal of applicability to this thesis. As a term that has been drawn from its original designation regarding the dispersions of the Jewish population in antiquity, diaspora has since developed into a

⁶⁰ H. Lessing, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. 2011. p. 34. ("Während man die Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Minderheit im Gebiet des heutigen Namibia sehr breit untersucht hat, ist die Entwicklung in Südafrika noch weitgehend unerschlossen" / While the history of the German-speaking minority in the region that is present day Namibia has been broadly researched, the (German minorities's) development in South Africa is still open to significant avenues of investigation).

⁶¹ H. Lessing, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. 2011. pp. 21-22, 25-26.

popular epithet for all manner of “transnational communities”.⁶² This has included its use as a reference to the migration of German populations that reached its peak over the later part of the nineteenth century and which has thus also given rise to an increasing number of academic publications referring to the existence of a “German diaspora”.⁶³ It is a proliferation that has seen social scientists such as Robin Cohen publish their own critique on the use of diaspora as a form of analytical terminology that includes the suggestion of its categorisation into various types of “victim, labour, trade, imperial and cultural” diaspora.⁶⁴ Moreover, it is in the book, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, that Cohen lends support to the idea of a set of diasporic criteria, as mooted by the political scientist, William Safran, that has since served as a benchmark for many scholars in this field.⁶⁵ Consisting of a number of key elements, Cohen’s criteria have been summarised by various subsequent authors, including the editors of another book on German immigrant identity, *The Heimat Abroad*, that reads as follows:

To qualify as a diaspora, the group should share some basic features: dispersal from a common homeland; a collective memory, myth, and idealisation of the homeland; a commitment to its (the home country’s) maintenance or creation; the development of a return movement; strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time; a troubled relationship with host societies; and empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries.⁶⁶

It is in taking cognisance of these criteria that Lessing and his co-editors, nevertheless, chose not to entertain the use of diaspora as a viable term in the analysis of German immigration to southern Africa. Based in part upon the term’s historical association to the forced dispersal of the Jewish, Armenian and Black African populations, Lessing explains that the idea of a German diaspora seemed inappropriate when placed within the context of Germany’s (colonial) history as a whole.⁶⁷ Further considerations involved the inherent changes that have been applied to the (diaspora) term’s traditional use regarding “institutional, political,

⁶² G. Lindenstrauss, *Transnational Communities and Diasporic Politics. Research Encyclopaedia of International Studies*. March, 2010.

⁶³ M. Schultz & J. Skidmore, “Diaspora Experiences. German Immigrants and their descendants”. *German Diasporic Experiences: Identity, Migration, and Loss*. 2008. p. xiii.

⁶⁴ R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. 2008. p. 6.

⁶⁵ R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. 2008. pp. 4-5.

⁶⁶ K. O’Donnell, R. Bridenthal & N. Reagin, *The Heimat Abroad. The Boundaries of Germanness*. 2008. p. 5.

⁶⁷ H. Lessing, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. 2011. pp. 41-45.

cultural and religious” associations relating to a “place of origin”, this especially when compared to its increasingly post-modern application as a purely metaphorical concept of separation.⁶⁸ It is with these factors in mind that Lessing argues that the use of Cohen’s models seems to raise more questions than it is able to supply answers, especially when applied to the circumstances of German migration to the African subcontinent.⁶⁹ Therefore, it is in drawing upon the more traditional migration theory of historians Klaus Bade, Pieter Emmer, Leo Lucassen and Jochen Oltmer in *The Encyclopaedia of Migration and Minorities in Europe*,⁷⁰ that Lessing seems to find a more agreeable methodology with which to frame the inherent complexities of German immigration to southern Africa.⁷¹ In doing so, Lessing subscribes to a model of immigration that can be regarded a process of social and cultural integration over successive generations. It is a process (as he goes on to explain) in which its actors often feel neither completely at home in their place of origin, nor in the venue of their destinations - this until adaptations to their new environment lessen ethnic distinctions and lead to their inevitable assimilation.⁷²

While Lessing and the editors of *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika* chose to eschew the use of diaspora as a descriptor for the events of German immigration and settlement to southern Africa, there are other examples of German migration histories that have been more prepared to adopt its term, though usually not without expressing some degree of caution. These include the book *Diasporic Experiences*,⁷³ edited by Mathias Schultze and James Skidmore along with the more recent publication, *Constructing a German Diaspora*⁷⁴, authored by Stefan Manz. Of the two, *German Diasporic Experiences*, as the product of an interdisciplinary conference on the topic of international German minorities, makes the widest allowances for the use of diaspora amongst its contributors.⁷⁵ In comparison, it is Manz who takes a more nuanced approach to the use of diaspora as a term that might be used to address the history of German transnational

⁶⁸ H. Lessing, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. 2011. pp. 41-45.

⁶⁹ H. Lessing, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. 2011. p. 44.

⁷⁰ K. Bade (et al.), *The Encyclopaedia of Migration and Minorities in Europe*. 2010.

⁷¹ H. Lessing, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. 2011. pp. 32-33.

⁷² H. Lessing, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. 2011. pp. 33-34.

⁷³ M. Schultze & J. Skidmore, *German Diasporic Experiences: Identity, Migration and Loss*. 2008. pp. xiii-xv.

⁷⁴ S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora. The “Greater German Empire”. 1871-1914*. 2014. pp. 7-11.

⁷⁵ M. Schultze & J. Skidmore, *German Diasporic Experiences: Identity, Migration and Loss*. 2008. pp. xiii-xv.

experiences. Drawing upon Cohen's diasporic criteria, Manz also considers the perspective of political scientist, Gabriel Sheffer, who similarly asserts the notion of (ethno-national) diaspora as applicable to those communities who have settled in a foreign or "host" country while maintaining a "common identity" and "solidarity" with co-ethnic / national members.⁷⁶ Yet, in the end, it is important to note that Manz decides against the use of either Cohen or Sheffer's criteria "as a ticklist" with which to justify the existence of a particular community as constituting a diaspora. Instead, he concludes that diaspora should best "be seen as a process" rather than a state of being, and as such should be thought of as the construct of an imagined community in the same way that populations are imagined as nations.⁷⁷ Therefore, it is along these lines that Manz directs his research into the area of what he calls "diaspora mobilisation" in order to investigate the degree to which schools, clubs and other examples of "trans-state networks" were able to influence the diasporic identities of expatriate communities in support of the German nation state.⁷⁸

It is from this view of diaspora as a "category of practice",⁷⁹ rather than a static entity, that this thesis defends the term's applicability to its own investigation into the identity of South African Germanness. In doing so, it is important to note that while the term diaspora has become a significant catch-phrase within the study of German immigration, the word itself has little actual representation within the sources of these (South African) German communities.⁸⁰ The one notable exception being the use of the term *Auslandsdiasporafürsorge* (provisions for the diaspora abroad) that was coined during the nineteenth century in relation to the German Protestant church's efforts to cater to the confessional needs of its members living abroad.⁸¹ For the most part, however, the idea of a German diaspora remains elusive even if it appears to offer a compelling description of the enormity of the German migrations that reached their peak over the latter part of the 1800s.⁸² It was a movement that occurred over exactly the same period of time as that of the HMS's own immigration

⁷⁶ S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora. The "Greater German Empire". 1871-1914.* 2014. pp. 8-9.

⁷⁷ S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora. The "Greater German Empire". 1871-1914.* 2014. pp. 10-11.

⁷⁸ S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora. The "Greater German Empire". 1871-1914.* 2014. pp. 8-9.

⁷⁹ R. Brubaker, "The 'diaspora' diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies.* 28:1. 2005. pp. 12-13.

⁸⁰ H. Lessing, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika.* 2011. p. 46.

⁸¹ H. Lessing, (et al.), *The German Protestant Church in Colonial Southern Africa.* 2012. p. 16.

⁸² K. O'Donnell, R. Bridenthal & N. Reagin, *The Heimat Abroad. The Boundaries of Germanness.* 2008. p. 5.

initiatives to the South African region and as such, those participating in the HMS migration cannot but have been governed by many of the same factors that served to influence this trend.⁸³ It follows that any attempt at an accurate appraisal of the HMS facilitated emigration must also take cognisance of global nineteenth century German migration that serves as part of its underlying context. In this respect, the fact that the vast majority of German emigrants elected to travel to North America has meant that the bulk of historical literature regarding German migration has similarly been produced in relation to this field. This includes substantive socio-economic inquiries such as those by Farley Grubb with, *German Immigration and Servitude in America, 1709-1920*⁸⁴ along with publications by historian Klaus Bade, including *Migration in European History*⁸⁵ and a chapter contribution titled, “German Transatlantic Emigration in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries”, published as part of the book, *European Expansion and Migration*.⁸⁶ Other similar contributions by scholars Lavern Rippley⁸⁷ and Georg Fertig⁸⁸ likewise address the circumstances that precipitated the mass German departures from Europe, including the established pre-disposition of German migrant labour practices before the advent of substantial trans-Atlantic migrations.

In turn, the existence of various case studies that investigate the patterns and networks of specific German populations over the course of their relocation add further depth to the nature of these inquiries. Here, books such as *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*⁸⁹, and *News from the land of freedom: German immigrants write home*,⁹⁰ both by Walther Kamphoefner, provide useful analyses through the application of primary research material, including valuable examples of the applicability of original written correspondence as an historical resource.⁹¹ Then, on an even more local level, books such as *Life at Four Corners. Religion, Gender,*

⁸³ F. Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*. 1990. p. 163.

⁸⁴ F. Grubb, *German Immigration and Servitude in America, 1709-1920*. 2011.

⁸⁵ K. Bade, *Migration in European History*. 2003.

⁸⁶ K. Bade, “German Transatlantic Emigration in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries”. *European Expansion and Migration*. Emmer & Mörner (ed). 1992.

⁸⁷ L. Rippley, “The Ethnic Frontier: Rural Germans and the Settlement of America”. *Immigrant America*. T. Walch (ed). 1994.

⁸⁸ G. Fertig, “Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Migration and Early German Anti-Migration Ideology”. *Migration, Migration History, History. Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*. J. Lucassen & L. Lucassen (ed.). 1997

⁸⁹ W. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*. 1984.

⁹⁰ W. Kamphoefner, *News from the land of freedom: German immigrants write home*. 1991.

⁹¹ D. Schneider, “Review: News from the land of freedom: German immigrants write home”. *State Historical Society of Iowa*. Vol. 52:1. 1993. pp. 99-100.

and Education in a German-Lutheran Community, 1868-1945,⁹² by Carol Coburn, present a history of cultural and social experiences that sustained German-Lutheran communities in Missouri. In the same vein, it is also important to mention the contribution of author Robert Frizzell whose book, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*,⁹³ details the circumstances that led to one village's chain migration to Lafayette County in Missouri during the nineteenth century. It is a contribution that, when considering that its case study lies less than 40 kilometres from the village of Hermannsburg, must be considered as an invaluable comparative and contextual resource for the purposes of this thesis.⁹⁴

As these sources suggest, there is a noticeable concentration of American historiography regarding the study of German Lutheran communities in the State of Missouri. They are communities that the historian, Frederick Luebke, addresses in his book, *Germans in the New World*, where he explains that the State of Missouri incurred a significant influx of German immigrants from the north west German lands during the mid nineteenth century, and particularly from the Kingdom of Hanover.⁹⁵ It was from this base of largely rural German families that Luebke credits the rise of what became the notably conservative Lutheran Missouri Synod of the Midwest United States. Explaining this phenomenon in relation to the earlier theories of the historian Oscar Handlin,⁹⁶ Luebke credits the idea of immigrant conservatism as arising from an "aggressive defense" against the crisis of having uprooted and transplanted to a foreign land.⁹⁷ Accordingly, Luebke suggests that this "immigrant condition" prompted many migrants and especially those who had been "cut loose from the moorings of peasant life", to adopt a greater degree of conservatism than those who had remained in Europe.⁹⁸ They are explanations that as with the work of Robert Frizzell, represent important sources with regard to this thesis's attempt to contextualise the conservative nature of the German South African community.

⁹² C. Coburn, *Life at Four Corners. Religion, Gender, and Education in a German-Lutheran Community, 1868-1945*. 1992.

⁹³ R. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*. 2007.

⁹⁴ R. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*. 2007. pp. 3, 12.

⁹⁵ F. Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*. 1990. p. 164.

⁹⁶ O. Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Stories of the Great Migrations that made the American People*. (1951) 2002. p. 6.

⁹⁷ F. Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*. 1990. p. 4.

⁹⁸ F. Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*. 1990. p. 4.

An overview of the chapters and primary source materials

It is with an eye towards these German-American case studies, along with the research that can be found in other publications regarding expatriate identities of Germanness⁹⁹ in books such as *The Heimat Abroad* and Manz's *Constructing a German Diaspora*, that this thesis addresses the need for similar investigations into the experience of the German South African minority. Beginning with an overview of the HMS, Chapter One of this thesis addresses the circumstances of life in the Kingdom of Hanover during the period of the German migrations and the influence of Christian pietism on the village of Hermannsburg at the time of the HMS's founding in 1849. It is with this context in mind, along with the arrival of the first HMS missionaries in Africa, that Chapter Two turns towards the Behrens family narrative whose collection of documents form the basis of this thesis's primary source materials. These sources, being based upon a range of life histories and autobiographies, have been written and maintained by the Behrens family and its relations and are, therefore, not generally available beyond its immediate circle. The exceptions being the biography of the HMS Missionary Wilhelm Behrens, *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt*¹⁰⁰ (What the old Mission farmyard tells) and the autobiography of his nephew, August Heinrich Dietrich Behrens, under the title, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*,¹⁰¹ both having been published by the HMS print in 1950 and 1956 respectively. Therefore it is with the use of these two sources that the chapter traces the manner in which the HMS network served as a means for individuals and their families to immigrate and establish themselves in Africa.

While the second chapter traces the experience of August Behrens as an independent immigrant who operated within the network of the HMS, it also introduces the experience of another immigrant, the HMS Missionary, Ernst Wehrman whose youngest daughter, Ida Wehrman, would eventually marry into the Behrens family. It follows that while the thesis's next chapter, Chapter Three, addresses the political and social upheaval of the South African War (SAW), the study also introduces the second generation of HMS immigrants and the settlements that were being founded as a means of catering to their continued existence as a German minority. It is within this context that the establishment of the farming

⁹⁹ K. O'Donnell, R. Bridenthal & N. Reagin (ed.), *The Heimat Abroad. The Boundaries of Germanness*. 2008. pp. 4-5; S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora. The "Greater German Empire". 1871-1914*. 2014. p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ J. Brammer, *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt. Ein Lebensbild des Betschuanenmissionars Wilhelm Behrens*. 1950.

¹⁰¹ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956.

settlement of Kroondal is brought to the fore as one such community of HMS descendants in what was then the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek (ZAR). Here, the use of the Kroondal community's collection of literary historical materials begins to play an important part in supplementing the Behrens families' account of this period. This includes information from the diary of Kroondal's first pastor, the HMS Missionary Christiaan Müller,¹⁰² and a variety of other sources that have been compiled into family and institutional *Festschriften* or "anniversary publications" - materials that the historian Hans Lessing noted in his introduction to *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*, as constituting an area that still has an inordinately large need for research.¹⁰³

It is in moving onto Chapter Four, in the aftermath of the SAW, that the thesis addresses the history of Kroondal as it began to be influenced by the rise of Germany's imperial nationalism and as such, the first genuine stirrings of its diasporic identity. It was an influence that was exemplified in the founding of the *Kroondaler Schulverein* (Kroondal School Association) and in which the experience of August Behrens's son, Gussy (August Wilhelm Theodor Behrens) and the daughter of the HMS Missionary, Ernst Wehrman, Ida, become the central theme of the chapter's narrative. In doing so, the thesis draws upon the autobiography of Gussy Behrens, compiled under the title, *Unser Vater Erzählt*¹⁰⁴ along with the short life history of Ida Behrens (née Wehrman).¹⁰⁵ Additionally, the chapter also utilises the diary of another HMS Missionary, Heinrich Behrens, and the annual reports¹⁰⁶ of the newly incumbent Kroondal pastor, Johannes von Zwiétring, to provide insight into the community's experience of the First World War.¹⁰⁷

In turn, Chapter Five addresses the inter-war period between the First and Second World Wars, in which Kroondal's self-perception was contextualised through the experience of a damaged German national pride. It is an identity that is clearly articulated in the institution of the annual Kroondal German Days or *Deutscher Tag*,

¹⁰² R. Ottermann, (ed.), *Pastor Christian Müller (1836-1916) und Frau Luise Müller, geb. Ottermann (1844-1930) von Kroondal*. Stellenbosch, 1995. pp. 38-39.

¹⁰³ H. Lessing, *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika*. 2011. pp. 34-35. (*ein außerordentlich großer Forschungsbedarf* / an inordinately large need for research)

¹⁰⁴ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt*.... 1975. pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁵ H. Behrens, *Gomutti*. 1975. p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Kroondal Church Archive, J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*.

¹⁰⁷ Kroondal Church Archive, J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*.

that were begun as a patriotic initiative by August Behrens in 1920. Accordingly, the use of another of Kroondal's celebratory publications, *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981* (Commemorative publication - 50. Kroondal German Day 1920 to 1981),¹⁰⁸ provides valuable insights into the community's sense of ethnic and national belonging, extending into the 1930s and the Nazi era. Yet, at the same time, the chapter also includes perspectives into the nature of the Kroondal community as seen by the author and eventual anti-Apartheid activist, Naboth Mokgatle, as a member of the surrounding Batswana community. Raised in proximity to the HMS mission station at *Phokeng*, Mokgatle recorded his experiences of 1920s Kroondal as a young labourer in his book, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. It is a resource that while having been subject to various reviews and having been featured as the focus of research of other dissertations and publications, has not yet been examined in relation to its commentary on the German South African minority.¹⁰⁹

While Chapter Six also begins to incorporate the experiences of the third generation of the Behrens family with the birth of Gussy and Ida's sons, Hugo and Richard Behrens, it is in this chapter that the focus moves onto the experience of these two boys as they reached adulthood over the course of the Second World War. It is a period that is informed by the unpublished autobiography of Hugo Behrens, *Ein Kroondaler*,¹¹⁰ along with the existence of an extensive collection of written correspondence between Richard Behrens and his mother, Ida, that from 1944 to 1952, amount to over 400 letters between them. From these documents, the family's perceptions of the War and of their interaction with other segments of South African society, provide an important window into the experience of the German South African minority during this time. It is a view that is extended into the thesis's appraisal of the German South African community's transition into the post-World War Two era in Chapter Seven that as in the previous section, continues to draw upon the autobiographies of both Hugo and Richard Behrens along with the on-going correspondence between the sons and their mother. Here, the thesis explores the

¹⁰⁸ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981.

¹⁰⁹ A. Vandenbosch, "The Rise of African Nationalism: The African National Congress, 1912-1952". *The American Political Science Review*. Vol 67:1. 1973. pp. 289-290. N. Hyman, "Book Review: The Autobiography of an Unknown South African". *African Affairs*. Vol. 71:283. 1972. pp. 216-217; C. Crais & T. McClendon (ed.), *The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. 2014. pp. 240-247; D. Brown, *Oral Literature & Performance in Southern Africa*. 1999; T. Ngwenya, Ideology and form in South African Autobiographical writing: A Study of the Autobiographies of South African Authors. (Doctoral Thesis. University of South Africa. 1996.

¹¹⁰ H. Behrens, *Ein Kroondaler*. (undated & unpublished).

further tangible results of Kroondal's diasporic identity through its commitment to the post-War German South African relief effort or DAHA (*Deutsch-Afrikanischer Hilfsausschuß*). When seen together with the Behrens brothers' courtship and marriage to German South African women in 1951 and the family's first experience of Germany through Gussy and Ida Behrens's visit to Europe, the chapter confirms the strength of national solidarity that persisted among the Kroondal community in the wake of the German defeat.

With the ignominious end of German nationalism in Europe and the election of the Apartheid government in South Africa in 1948, the German South African minority found itself increasingly estranged from the post-War identity that had begun to emerge in the new West German Republic. It is a theme that is explored in Chapter Eight that returns to examine the sources of the Kroondal German Day and the autobiographical information of the Behrens brothers. Here, the increasingly tumultuous events of South Africa's anti-Apartheid struggle are addressed in one further set of correspondence, this time between Richard Behrens and his wife, Irma, during a period of study leave that Richard spent in Germany during 1960. Where other resources include the oral testimonies of some of the Behrens family's fourth generation, the chapter focuses on the dichotomy that emerges between the persistence of Kroondal's conservatively diasporic identity in relation to the changing perception of Germanness in (West) Germany itself. Thus, it was within the context of the altering social and economic realities of Kroondal during the 1980s, that its community began to take on the unmistakable trajectory of a decline.

The story of the Kroondal settlement and that of the Behrens family within it, traces the diasporic arc of South African Germanness as it relates to the descendant communities of nineteenth century German immigration. In doing so the thesis draws upon a diverse collection of biographical material across four generations, with which to construct its narrative as a minority view of 150 years of South African history. This includes themes such as gender roles and inter-racial relations that formed part of its overall experience of a changing and often challenging South African environment. Yet, while the thesis offers an important addition to an otherwise underrepresented field of the South African historiography, it is also cognisant of the fact that the study's narrative remains unavoidably selective due to the very nature of biography itself. It is a consideration that will be discussed in the next and last section of this introduction under the title Biography.

Biography

"Trespass is inherent when you write outside of your own experience, but there are no other portraits, no other voices."¹¹¹

- Adam Johnson.

This quote by the author Adam Johnson, in an interview relating to his historical novel on the social conditions of North Korea, paints a fitting picture with which to address the fundamental problem of almost all writing that takes place from without - that is, from the point of view of an outsider. More specifically, it is a dilemma in which the writer of existent persons or communities finds him (or her) self in when attempting to address the totality of a life and identity of another. In each instance the inescapable subjectivity of all forms of biography, including those of autobiography, arguably compromise the author as being either too near or too far from their subject. In academia the delicate matter of objectivity, as it relates to the social sciences, gives rise to the question of what exactly is a suitable distance from which to survey a subject? Too close, and the researcher errs towards a degree of familiarity and therefore the possibility of overt loyalty in relation to the material. Too far, and the question of reliability of context is equally relevant in which the depth of understanding is estranged from the reality of its subject matter. In either instance, when writing about anybody else's life, trespass is inherent.

While the information that has been used to construct this thesis involves a substantial range of biographical, autobiographical, oral and original written correspondence, that has already been discussed in the introduction, the process of its collation into a single narrative remains undeniably selective. In this sense, while there certainly are "other portraits and other voices" that frame the lives of each subject, it is in trying to draw them together in their mutual association to one another (and to South African society in general) that the need for a new narrative, in the form of this historical investigation, is found. How then does one approach the task of investigating life history with a view to both its academic and personal associations, and what room is there for privacy in the delineation of facts or the deliberation of their meanings? If the notion regarding the sanctity of life holds sway in our society today, what form of sanctity can endure for those who have passed and of whom all that remains is memory? They are questions that, if they are to be addressed with a

¹¹¹ P. Stansky, *Adam Johnson: The Writing Process*. "How I write - Stanford University". Platform: iTunes U (Interview 2012-10-23) / (released 2012-11-13).

degree of certainty, need to be addressed from an understanding of the complexity of memory and of its relationship to identity.

The idea of memory as a vehicle of identity was first famously purported by the philosopher John Locke more than 300 years ago, when he proposed that "the continuity of self is located in memory".¹¹² It is a statement that has remained a prominent point of departure for scholars who have since attempted to address the nature of human self-awareness in their work. Of these, the more recent arguments of physician and philosopher Raymond Tallis, regarding the problems pertaining to the "authenticity of apparent memory", provides some succinct commentary on the continuing nature of this discussion.¹¹³ According to Tallis, Locke's idea to equate the continuity of human identity to a person's mental consciousness and to memory in particular, fails to acknowledge the inherently fluctuant qualities of the human psyche. As such, he goes on to explain that any vividness of recollection ultimately offers no guarantee to the veracity of its apparent memory and therefore, (one can assume) certainly not to the construction of a personal identity through a narrative of events.¹¹⁴ While this would appear a damning report on the reliability of memory as a means to personal and historical inquiry, it is interesting to note that memory has by no means ceased to play a part in recent historical research. Quite to the contrary in fact, given that the number of publications that specifically cite memory as an integral part of their discussion has anything but abated. In this respect, it can well be argued that where the empirical authenticity of memory is without a doubt questionable, its validity, as an inherently human characteristic, is not.

With this in mind, how does history and more specifically biography, relate to the use of memory as a meaningful source of information? To begin with, it is important to note that the idea of identity, as the "sameness of a thing with itself", is a concept far less simple than it might appear.¹¹⁵ Where philosophy often chooses to engage in the discussion of what might well be termed as "absolute" or numerical identity, the more pluralistic notion of qualitative identity has nevertheless emerged to stake its claim

¹¹² N. Nimbalkar, "John Locke on Personal Identity", *Mens Sana Monographs*. 2011 Jan-Dec; 9(1). pp. 268-269. URL = <www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3115296/#__ffn_sectitle> Access: 2016-01-08.

¹¹³ R. Tallis, "Identity and the Mind", *Identity*. G. Walker & E. Leedham-Green (ed.). 2010. pp. 193-194.

¹¹⁴ R. Tallis, "Identity and the Mind", *Identity*. G. Walker & E. Leedham-Green (ed.). 2010. p. 194.

¹¹⁵ H. Noonan & B. Curtis, "Identity", *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/identity/>> Access: 2016-01-05.

amongst the social sciences. A simple way to explain the difference of each approach may be to suggest that where the concept of absolute identity remains concerned with an analysis in terms of definitive proof of “sameness”, the notion of qualitative identity recognises the existence of “sameness” by degrees. An often cited example to help clarify this idea would be to say that "Poodles and Great Danes are qualitatively identical because they share the property of being a dog"; to which of course it should be added that the comparison of two poodles would likely share a far greater degree of sameness still.¹¹⁶ By extension, the physical identity of a man (through the existence of his body) can be said to be his and his alone for all his life, and yet it would be inaccurate to suggest that his body had remained identical from the cradle to the grave. As such, when considering that the memories of all individuals might likewise undergo innumerable transitions of perspective over their lives, it would not do to negate these as therefore being unidentifiable with that of a person’s life experience as a whole.

The use of memory as the basis of all life stories and therefore indeed, much of biography, must be regarded as a relevant agent of identity, albeit with a prerequisite awareness of its limitations. It is, therefore, in the acceptance of the subjectivity of all forms of memory that history itself remains grounded in the humanities. As the nineteenth century transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson attributed to Napoleon, "what is history but a fable agreed upon?".¹¹⁷ In this respect, it is no secret that the writing of history arguably says as much about the era in which it was written as it does about the era that it is writing about. Indeed, as much as we would like to argue otherwise, popular conceptions of culture, philosophy and morality remain the springboard into the way that we relate to our world and certainly to the imagined world of history that Emerson insists, is already fading into fiction.¹¹⁸

If all history is selective, as it must be, then we as historians selectively write about that which matters most to us. Or indeed, that which matters to our audience. In this way, it can be argued that history ultimately needs to be re-written by every

¹¹⁶ H. Noonan & B. Curtis, “Identity”, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/identity/>> Access: 2016-01-05.

¹¹⁷ D. Robinson, “Transcendentalism and Its Times”, *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*. J. Porta & S. Morris (ed.). pp. 13-14; R. W. Emerson, “History”, *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Volume II. Essays: First Series*. J. Slater, A. Ferguson & J. Ferguson Carr (ed). 1979. p. 6.

¹¹⁸ R. W. Emerson, “History”, *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Volume II. Essays: First Series*. J. Slater, A. Ferguson & J. Ferguson Carr (ed). 1979. p. 6.

generation, as doing so allows each era to grapple with the nature of its present identity. The idea of a "complete" history is only complete in that the questions of that age, as Emerson puts it, have been answered.¹¹⁹ New questions would always require a new appraisal and as such, another history. In this fashion, history books will always be dated by the era that produced them, and we should be thankful for it, or else there would be no history left to write, save the neurotic attention to current events. When taking this argument even further, the writing of history ultimately becomes paradoxical. The greater the distance to the time or event in question, the greater the depth of perspective, and yet, thereby too, the greater the distortion of its lens. It would seem self-evident that the people who are living within the actual moments of history are its only real source of authenticity, but then again they themselves are usually considered too close to their circumstances to be suitably rid of bias, or at the very least, the inevitable distortions of memory. While this might appear to trivialise the validity of history as a serious academic pursuit it would only threaten to do so if we failed to recognise that its true value exists in its engagement with the complexity of our human story as an unfolding mystery of memory and identity. When seen as such, history can no longer be thought of as a one way street that moves according to a linear conception of time, but rather as a myriad of intersections in which the study of history becomes a dual carriage way and in which authors and scholars alike attempt to signpost the paths once trodden, albeit from the air and from incrementally increasing altitudes.

From this perspective, to study history is to study impermanence. If the various attributes of the human spirit were not so adaptable and selective, but thereby also questionable, then the development of humankind would be comparable to that of other species and largely relegated to the field of instincts and genetics. However, it is our ability to constantly reinvent ourselves that is both troubling and invigorating at the same time. Memory, and our engagement with its shaky ground is not a threat to the integrity of history, but rather the elixir that keeps our discipline alive. Without it, history would dissolve into impersonal, statistical jargon. In this way it can be maintained that history is organic, because to be fair the only other descriptor is to say that it is dead, which it is, and that the remnants of the past provide the matter for the present growth and the framework of the present's own inevitable demise and death. It follows that to engage in history is to engage in the glimpse of our own identity and mortality.

¹¹⁹ R. W. Emerson, "History", *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Volume II. Essays: First Series*. J. Slater, A. Ferguson & J. Ferguson Carr (ed). 1979. p. 4.

If we can agree that history is principally defined as our relationship to the past (rather than the past itself) and that all history is ultimately built upon a lattice of individual memories, why does the study of biography remain so troublesome to modern historians?¹²⁰ It is a question that goes to the heart of how recent historiography has tried to position itself as an accurate and reliable science, which all things considered, is at once a necessary and impossible task. It follows that a plausible answer to this question comes from the empirical weight that has to be assigned to any piece of historical material, namely that of when, where and by whom was it written, followed by why was it written, and what proof do we have to corroborate these claims? Of course, the key to all of this is that many traditions of history are happy to concern themselves with exactly and only that which has, in fact, already been written and which therefore also offers the relative security of ink on white paper. In contrast, the highly personalised information that may be offered from an individual source usually provides little by way of which its details can be vetted by fellow historians in the field. It might therefore, be fair to say that where the position of established history, as that which can be found and referenced in archives and libraries, offers the weight of what has become the collective memory of our society, the use of biography offers little more than the weight of individual memory and is thereby, not surprisingly, often received with a degree of polite disdain.

While the totality of history is built upon the foundations of memory, it is certainly no surprise that not all memories are thereby considered to be equal. This begs the question of who exactly decides what is worthy of remembrance? It is here that the study of history (and biography even more so) traditionally becomes divided, in which the grand narratives of famous individuals and "historic" events are typically estranged from the lives of the silent masses.¹²¹ However, it is in relation to the latter that the more recent development of a new historiography as a sort of "history from below",¹²² has sought to delve into the lives of those who have quite often been overlooked by history and of whom the only verifiable sources are those that are likely to be found in the statistics of archival information.¹²³ Consequently, for anyone

¹²⁰ D. Zeitlyn, "Writing history, talking historically: problems of biography, autobiography and social history (2003-04 evals-pritchard Lecture 2). Oxford University. Platform: iTunes U (released: 2010-11-04); H. Lee, "Virginia Woolf's Nose: Essays on Biography. *British Biography*. C. Rollyson (ed.). 2005. p. 305.

¹²¹ K. Harris, "Leung Quinn: an unstable subject with an unsettling story." South African Historical Society Conference 2015-07-03 (unpublished). pp. 1-2.

¹²² E. P. Thompson, "History from Below," *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 April 1966. pp. 279-80.

¹²³ C. van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine*. 1997. p. 3.

wishing to explore the terrain of these "new" histories the inevitable choice is either to engage with the personal memories and artefacts of their subjects or to be content with letting their knowledge fade into the chasm of the unrecorded past.

It is here, when treading upon the territory of a person's life, that the most essential challenge of biography comes to the fore, namely, how do we engage the memories of an individual with sufficient respect while at the same time subjecting them to the rigours of an historical investigation? It is the question with which this topic began and which is therefore informed by the context of its reasoning thus far. If we believe in the connections between the faculties of memory and identity, however tenuous their absolute authenticity might be, then the meanings that they imbue become the basis for the meaning of our lives. In the greater scheme of things it is, therefore, not long before these meanings are all that is left of a life that was once lived and certainly for none more so than for those who remain. It is along these lines that our personal, communal and even national narratives can all be regarded as the translation of meaning from their origins as memories into the framework of our identities. Accordingly, both memory and narrative can be regarded as part of our need to link our present reality to that which is now gone and, in so doing, to come to grips with the fact of our own mortality. As such, it might not be too much to suggest that our narratives are partly an attempt to take the dead along with us in the hope of informing their (but more especially our) existence with a more lasting sense of meaning than that which was afforded to them by the physical limitations of time.

With this in mind what degree of sanctity do we owe to the memories of those individuals who are being remembered? And, for that matter, does anybody have the right to be forgotten? To be certain, the sanctity of a memory is not sacred because it is beyond reproach, quite to the contrary, it is sacred because in almost every respect it is all that remains of a life. As such, we do not refrain from speaking about those who have passed-on as is the norm in various cultures and which, when seen in its context is entirely understandable.¹²⁴ Instead, in our Westernised pursuit of truth, the idea of human rights is juxtaposed against the right to information - we feel that we have the right to know. For some, especially for those who have been thrust into the limelight of fame, we regard their right to privacy as being forfeited as part of a sort of macabre economy of transaction. The benefits of fame as a degree of immortality (or infamy for those unfortunate enough to court it) seem to demand a

¹²⁴ J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*. 1926. pp. 349-375.

payment, a sort of sacrifice as counterpoint, in which personal privacy gives way to public scrutiny and their right to be forgotten is lost.

So, who decides what, and just as importantly, how things are remembered? A collection of letters that were not thrown away or an autobiography might all, in some vane, be regarded as evidence of wishing to be remembered. But there is a difference between the remembrance of close friends and family to that which is offered by academic enquiry. While both are inescapably selective it is the nature of the audience that drives the selectivity towards its goal. In this respect, it is likewise important to note that most memories are simply not recorded at all and therefore remain in the imaginations of their keepers, whereupon, if they are shared are then soon shrouded in the narratives of successive generations. It follows that family histories are invariably steeped in some form of oral tradition. It is from amongst these considerations that the building blocks of all serious history must nevertheless, be drawn from that which is reasonably verifiable.¹²⁵ And yet, in order to offer something new, all history must move beyond this point and risk developing its own conclusions. It is in this action of interpretation that the role of historians is given its shape. The writing of history cannot just entail the transmission of facts. In order to engage meaningfully with the past historians must nurture a keen interest and imagination regarding the lives and circumstances of others. In this sense, there is no firm recipe to history, only alchemy. For the most part historians were not there and even if they were, theirs would still only offer one interpretation of events. This is ultimately what keeps history alive, relevant and rooted in the humanities and in which the only real antidote to subjectivity is the acknowledgment of the selective nature of all interpretations. It therefore stands to reason that history evokes a mystery. We can never fully know the lives of our subjects, nor should we pretend to. The sanctity of memory does not mean that we should refrain from asking difficult questions of those who came before us, only that we should remain sensitive to the fact that in their essence, our questions can never fully be answered.

¹²⁵ K. Harris, "Leung Quinn: an unstable subject with an unsettling story." South African Historical Society Conference 2015-07-03 (unpublished). p. 3.

Chapter 1 *Die Hermannsburger Wanderung* - The Hermannsburg Migration

In October of 1853, a small group of north German missionaries from the newly formed HMS, sailed into the North Sea with the goal of reaching the “unconverted and unchristianised”¹ peoples of the African continent. Their intention was to head south to the Cape of Good Hope before charting a new course to the east that would lead them into the Indian Ocean and on to Mombasa on the Swahili coastline.² Here they hoped to journey inland to reach the Oromo of Gallaland who they had been led to believe were well suited for mission work.³ It was a venture that would become known as the *Bauernmission*⁴ or farmer’s mission and the nature of its impetus sets the context for the narrative of this thesis.

The HMS, that was begun in 1849 in the little Hanoverian village from which it took its name, was the almost single-handed product of its charismatic, and at times controversial pastor, Ludwig Harms.⁵ In every other respect, there is no reason to suggest that its positioning would otherwise have lent itself to produce one of the largest of Germany’s international mission organisations.⁶ As it was, its location on the Lüneburger heath, or *Lüneburger Heide*, of Lower Saxony, could quite easily be seen to have been little more than a backwater of marginal farm land, boasting no noteworthy feature that might be used to explain its otherness.⁷ Indeed, when compared to the other villages that surrounded it, nothing in Hermannsburg’s meagre commerce nor its foundational schooling could have indicated that its

¹ This is understood to mean that they were not influenced by Christian European culture and practices associated with the European concept of Christendom or Christian civilisation. (D. Bosch, *Witness To The World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*. 1980. p. 135.)

² A. Walz, *Der Hardealand-Konflikt und die Botswana-Mission* (Masters Thesis), Missionshochschule in Stavanger. 2013. pp. 14, 16.

³ (“kein mehr versprechendes Land für die Mission als dieses.”) E. Bauernochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland, Anfänge der Hermannsburger Missionsarbeit in Äthiopien*. 2006. p. 44; E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 50.

⁴ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsburger Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1880-1939*. Göttingen. 1988. p. 30.; C. Grundmann, “Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind: Ludwig Harms and the Founding of the Hermannsburg Mission”. *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. p. 386.

⁵ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 33-34, 42; A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 39, 75.

⁶ C. Grundmann, “Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind: Ludwig Harms and the Founding of the Hermannsburg Mission”. *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. p. 381.

⁷ H. Küster, *Die Entdeckung der Lüneburger Heide als „schöne Natur“*. URL = <http://www.europa.clio-online.de/site/lang__de/ItemID__429/mid__12191/40208767/Default.aspx> Access: 2016-04-24. p. 1.

population would have been inclined to adopt such tremendous ambitions of intercultural and transnational philanthropy.⁸ It has, therefore, often been suggested that what happened in Hermannsburg was nothing more, or less, than the product of human idealism in the form of a distinctly religious spirituality.⁹ And yet, at the same time, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that the migration from Hermannsburg that took place over the second half of the nineteenth century, coincided with the peak of an unprecedented exodus of German families and individuals who were searching for a better life abroad. It is with a view towards these events that this chapter examines some of the factors that precipitated what could, thereby, be regarded as the Hermannsburg migration.

German Migrations

When placing the village of Hermannsburg within the broader context of the modern German migrations it is important to expand a little further upon what are considered to be the principal circumstances surrounding its events. In particular, it is necessary to take cognisance of the fact that most scholars now recognise the existence of well established migratory patterns within the German lands as having long predated the mass emigrations of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ It is a realisation that has had a significant impact on the perception that German communities were essentially “spatially static” (in preceding centuries) before being compelled to move in search of better opportunities elsewhere.¹¹ It follows that established authors, such as Georg Fertig, have argued that an existing propensity for Germans to migrate probably contributed as much to the development of large scale nineteenth century German emigration as did the so-called “push and pull” factors that are otherwise typically cited as an explanation.¹²

⁸ A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. p. 10.; H. Küster, *Die Entdeckung der Lüneburger Heide als „schöne Natur“*. p. 6.

⁹ C. Grundmann, “Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind: Ludwig Harms and the Founding of the Hermannsburg Mission”. *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. p. 381; E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsbürger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 33-34, 42; A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 33, 39-43.

¹⁰ G. Fertig, “Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Migration and Early German Anti-Migration Ideology”. *Migration, Migration History, History. Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*. J. Lucassen & L. Lucassen (ed.). 1997. pp. 273-275; P. Ottteness, *Becoming German: The 1709 Palatine Migration to New York*. 2004. p. 17.

¹¹ G. Fertig, “Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Migration and Early German Anti-Migration Ideology”. *Migration, Migration History, History. Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*. J. Lucassen & L. Lucassen (ed.). 1997. p. 273.

¹² G. Fertig, “Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Migration and Early German Anti-Migration Ideology”. *Migration, Migration History, History. Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*. J. Lucassen & L. Lucassen (ed.). 1997. pp. 273-275; R. Tilly, *The German Economy during the Nineteenth Century*. 2004. p. 95.

While these arguments certainly help to re-contextualise the history of German migratory movements, they do not serve to discount the fact that at their core, the fundamental motives for most of these migrations remain attributable to economic pressures.¹³ Indeed, while the specific circumstances that brought about the migratory behaviour of local communities remained significantly varied, it was the disjointed political, religious and economic framework of the Holy Roman Empire that ultimately perpetuated the conditions of economic hardship leading up to the nineteenth century. It is a situation that the historian Sheilach Ogilvie describes as an economy that was “segmented over very small geographical areas” by virtue of aspects such as trade barriers, non-standardised currency weights, transportation problems, taxation and other economic policies.¹⁴ In addition, the fractured interplay between the traditional imperial authority and those of the individual territorial states, served to foster significant tensions that often led to prolonged periods of conflict in the various regions. Of these, none was more devastating to the German economy and population alike than the extended upheaval of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).¹⁵ As one of the bloodiest in European history its conflict had been born out of the confessional divides between Christian Protestants and Catholics before rapidly growing into a battle of political influence in central Europe. Although exact numbers are based on scholarly estimates, it is generally accepted that the death toll in the German lands alone numbered upwards of several million killed, which at the time represented between 15% and 20% of the pre-War population.¹⁶ In some regions this percentage is thought to have numbered upwards of 60% and even 70% percent of its residential population, thereby leaving entire districts of the Holy Roman Empire depopulated. To make matters even worse, numerous territories also experienced a resurgence of plague in the decades following the Peace of Westphalia that had marked the War’s end.¹⁷

If the catastrophe of war and disease that had decimated vast segments of the German population initially left the economy of central Europe in tatters, its events are, nevertheless, cited by historians as having ushered in the birth of the modern

¹³ G. Fertig, “Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Migration and Early German Anti-Migration Ideology”. *Migration, Migration History, History. Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*. J. Lucassen & L. Lucassen (ed.). 1997. pp. 274-275.

¹⁴ S. Ogilvie & M. Cerman, *European Proto-Industrialization: An Introductory Handbook*. 1996. p. 122.

¹⁵ P. Otteness, *Becoming German: The 1709 Palatine Migration to New York*. 2004. p. 12.

¹⁶ K. Cramer, *The 30 Years’ War and German Memory in the Nineteenth Century*. 2007. p. 178.

¹⁷ G. Parker (ed.), *The Thirty Years’ War*. 1997. p. 189.

era and the emergence of the European nation states.¹⁸ One of the first of these to have emerged from the conflicts of the early seventeenth century was the Dutch Republic that had successfully managed to navigate this destructive period of European history while defending its succession from Spanish Habsburg authority. Therefore, at a time when the lands of the Holy Roman Empire were still lying waste, the small federation of Dutch city states was able to undertake the phenomenal growth of its mercantile economy in the absence of long standing Spanish embargoes.¹⁹ The result was that, for the German population, the emergence of a booming neighbouring economy represented an important opportunity for many of its impoverished subjects to supplement whatever income they were able to generate at home. They were developments that in the following decades quickly gave rise to a network of internal labour migrations in which scores of young German speakers made their way to the Netherlands to work as contracted seasonal labour.²⁰

Although the practice of migratory labour was by no means limited to the so-called *Hollandgängerei* (“those going to Holland”), once established, its influences remained an important aspect of internal German migration up until the decline of the Dutch economy at the end of the eighteenth century.²¹ When seen in conjunction with other forms of internal migrations that included elements such as newly trained “journeyman” artisans who were usually required to depart their native region due to either guild restrictions or the lack of an adequate market, it is now estimated that up to one third of all Germans tended to move away from their place of birth during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²² Likewise, for those individuals who were born into landed rural families the laws of partible inheritance that predominated in certain areas meant that many farmers were forced into migrant labour practices in order to supplement the steadily diminishing size of family holdings.²³ Taken together, the varied circumstances of each territorial state along with the larger social

¹⁸ W. Rocznik, “The Thirty Years War”, *Oxford Bibliographies*. <<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0127.xml>>. Access: 10/09/2016.

¹⁹ D. Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the age of Mercantilism, 1650-1770*. 2005. pp. 33-34.

²⁰ W. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*. 1987. p. 35.

²¹ S. Meyer, “In-Migration and Out-Migration in an Area of Heavy Industry: The Case of Georgsmarienhütte, 1856-1870. *People in Transit: German Migrations in Comparative*. (ed.) D. Hoerder & J. Nagler. 2002. pp. 178, 180.

²² G. Fertig, “Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Migration and Early German Anti-Migration Ideology”. *Migration, Migration History, History. Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*. J. Lucassen & L. Lucassen (ed.). 1997. p. 273; P. Otteness, *Becoming German: The 1709 Palatine Migration to New York*. 2004. p. 13; R. Tilly, *The German Economy During the Nineteenth Century*. 2004. p. 106.

²³ P. Otteness, *Becoming German: The 1709 Palatine Migration to New York*. 2004. p. 17.

upheavals of events such as ongoing wars and occasional famines meant that large segments of the German population had become accustomed to the occurrences of migratory movement, even if not necessarily over substantial distances.²⁴

It was from this basis of well-established internal migration patterns that scholars such as Fertig consider the development of large scale German emigration as an extension of an existing phenomenon, rather than a radical departure from previous norms. Accordingly, even the tremendous growth of the nineteenth century German trans-Atlantic emigrations can be seen as an expansion of an established migratory route rather than that of a completely unprecedented event.²⁵ In this instance, it was largely due to the development of steam technology and the associated benefits of shorter transit times, along with the increased affordability of passenger fares, that created both the opportunity and incentive for many Germans to consider it as an attractive option.²⁶ The result was that by the end of the nineteenth century alone, more than five million Germans had embarked upon the voyage to America in the hope of capitalising upon better opportunities than those that they might have received in their native German regions.²⁷

In comparison, the socio-economic conditions of the nineteenth century Kingdom of Hanover in which the village of Hermannsburg lay situated, presented its population with a set of circumstances that, while comparable to many of the other German states, were nevertheless relatively unique with regard to its own geo-political positioning. Set on the north-western extremity of what had by 1815 become the German Confederation, its inhabitants were well positioned to make use of the neighbouring Dutch economy along with that of the prospering mercantile port city of Hamburg.²⁸ What is more, most of what was to become its territory had been spared the worst ravages of the Thirty Years' War, during which time its rural areas are estimated to have experienced only a marginal drop in their overall population.²⁹

²⁴ G. Fertig, "Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Migration and Early German Anti-Migration Ideology". *Migration, Migration History, History. Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*. J. Lucassen & L. Lucassen (ed.). 1997. p. 273.

²⁵ G. Fertig, "Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Migration and Early German Anti-Migration Ideology". *Migration, Migration History, History. Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*. J. Lucassen & L. Lucassen (ed.). 1997. p. 273.

²⁶ F. Grubb, *German Immigration and Servitude in America, 1709-1920*. 2011. pp. 379, 381-382.

²⁷ R. Cohen, *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration*. 1995. p. 132.

²⁸ G. Parker (ed.), *The Thirty Years' War*. 1997. p. 189.

²⁹ G. Parker (ed.), *The Thirty Years' War*. 1997. p. 190; H. Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany 1648-1840*. 1982. p. 22.

(This opposed to the nearly twenty percent average for the Holy Roman Empire as a whole). In fact, the city of Hamburg was even recorded to have experienced an increase of its inhabitants³⁰ during this period, both due to the fact that its imposing defences were never attempted by invading armies and the concomitant influx of refugees from neighbouring areas.³¹ Yet, in spite of its relatively fortunate position during the war, the economic circumstances of the territory would remain largely divided between the growth of commercial centres such as Hamburg and what would otherwise remain as a largely rural economy throughout the area.³²

Although the two centuries between the cessation of the Thirty Years' War and the formation of the HMS in 1849 had seen the steady recovery of the German population, its continued political and financial divisions did little to assist the growth of the region's economy.³³ Accordingly, while many other European countries had begun the process of industrialisation by the 1820s and 1830s, Germany's disjointed political framework served to delay the development of a similar trend in many of its states.³⁴ Instead, for the first half of the eighteenth century, most of the German territories continued to rely on the proto-industries that had already become an important feature of its economy in the preceding century. They were the small scale, so-called "cottage" industries that could be employed and operated without significant capital investment that thereby served as an important source of income for many rural households.³⁵ In a territory such as Hannover, as with much of northern Germany, one of the most prominent of these industries had been the spinning and weaving of linen.³⁶ However, with the rapid rise of European and particularly British industrialisation, these proto-industries were increasingly hard pressed to be able to compete with both the volume and affordability of large scale industrial operations.³⁷

³⁰ P. Dollinger, *The German Hansa*. 1970. p. 365.

³¹ H. Lempa, *Beyond the Gymnasium: Educating the Middle-class Bodies in Classical Germany*. 2007. p. 186.

³² A. Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany*. 2001. pp. 23, 31.

³³ R. Tilly, *The German Economy During the Nineteenth Century*. 2004. p. 88.

³⁴ S. Ogilvie & M. Cerman, *European Proto-Industrialization: An Introductory Handbook*. 1996. p. 133; M. Bertraum, "The End of Dynastic Union 1815-1837". *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History, 1714-1837*. B. Simms & t. Riotte (ed.). 2007. p. 124

³⁵ S. Ogilvie & M. Cerman (ed.), *European Proto-Industrialization: An Introductory Handbook*. 1996. pp. 71, 125.

³⁶ N. Pounds, *An Historical Geography of Europe 450 B.C.-A.D. 1330*. 1973. p. 391.

³⁷ R. Tilly, *The German Economy During the Nineteenth Century*. 2004. p. 95.

While the effects of European industrialisation certainly played a crucial role in hampering the proto-industrial economy of the Hanoverian state, historians have cited its developments as only one in a range of circumstances that would have contributed to the region's patterns of emigration.³⁸ Among the most common of those to be mentioned was the tremendous growth of Germany's population that took place almost universally in the decade after the fall of Napoleonic France.³⁹ It was a period that set the precedent for what thereupon resulted in an average increase in the German population of approximately 65% between 1816 and 1870. Such growth was similarly experienced by the Kingdom of Hanover which, despite being one of the least densely populated states in the then German Confederation, grew from 1.3 million inhabitants in 1818 to 1.9 million in 1865.⁴⁰ It is from this significant expansion in the demography of the German territories that much of the related historiography argues in favour of over-population as a leading cause of Germany's nineteenth century emigrations.⁴¹

When these developments are seen in relation to the village of Hermannsburg, that itself far exceeded the national norm by growing from approximately 600 individuals in 1820 to over one and a half thousand by 1871,⁴² it is not difficult to surmise that such an increase would have had a significant impact on the socio-economic circumstances of its inhabitants. Indeed, for a community such as Hermannsburg, that lay situated on the marginal farmlands of the Lüneburger Heath, the growth of its population together with industrialism's challenge to its proto-industry must be regarded as important contributors to the growing rate of under-employment that arose during this period. This was certainly evident in the trend of what in rural areas such as Hermannsburg, were commonly referred to as *Häuslinge* (home-lings).⁴³ They were the younger siblings of hereditary landholders who in the face of the shrinking availability of land were often either forced to remain as a working hand in their older brother's home, or alternatively, would enter into short term lease

³⁸ W. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*. 1987. p. 27.

³⁹ R. Tilly, *The German Economy During the Nineteenth Century*. 2004. p. 94.

⁴⁰ R. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*. 2007. p. 8; A. Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany*. 2001. p. 26.

⁴¹ G. Fertig, "Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Migration, and Early German Anti-Migration Ideology". *Migration, Migration History, History. Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*. J. Lucassen & L. Lucassen (ed.). 1997. pp. 274-275.

⁴² K. Rütthe, "No longer Adams in a simple Eden: Culture and Clothing in Hermannsburg Missions in the Western Transvaal, 1864-1910". 1997. p. 3.

⁴³ R. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*. 2007. p. 17.

agreements with other peasant farmers. In the case of the latter, such *Heuerleute* (tenants) might procure the use of a small acreage with which to subsist upon in return for the provision of his labour to the landlord for a number of days per annum.⁴⁴ Mostly, however, such arrangements were not able to provide these small scale farmers with a sufficient means with which to survive and many, therefore, also practiced a form of artisanship in order to supplement their income.⁴⁵ In this respect, even though the Kingdom of Hanover differed from many of the German states to the south by upholding a policy of impartible inheritance, (whereby an estate was inherited by the eldest son alone and not divided amongst his brothers), the rising numbers of *Häuslinge* and *Heuerleute* nevertheless contributed to the spread of increasingly inefficient small scale agricultural operations.⁴⁶

It was in the face of these concerns as part of a growing need to improve the general efficiency of the region's agricultural production, that the Kingdom of Hanover chose to embark upon a series of land reforms that began in the 1820's and 1830's.⁴⁷ One of the principle agendas was to begin the process of removing the cumbersome remnants of what had been the region's feudal laws whereby most peasant farmers were still required to pay yearly sums to either the state, church or gentry in return for the use of the land. These so-called "obligations" were usually highly specific to the piece of land in question and as such were also markedly different in the manner that its amount was expected to be paid, typically involving services of labour, agricultural produce or money.⁴⁸ It was, therefore, in 1833, and after extensive negotiations that the Hanoverian state passed a general redemptive law whereby peasants were both allowed and encouraged to redeem these obligations at a rate that would be equal to 25 times that of their yearly sum. Accordingly, those farmers that managed to do so were then able to exercise direct control of their fields and forgo the burden of future annual payments. These redemptions were similarly applied to the village commons, forests and non-arable lands that the state wished to

⁴⁴ W. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*. 1987. p. 4

⁴⁵ R. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*. 2007. pp. 8-10.

⁴⁶ W. Kamphoefner, "German Immigration Research, North, South and East: Findings, Methods, and Open Questions". *People in Transit: German Migrations in Comparative*. (ed.) D. Hoerder & J. Nagler. 2002. p. 19; R. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*. 2007. p. 17.

⁴⁷ W. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*. 1987. p. 26.

⁴⁸ R. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*. 2007. pp. 13-15.

transfer into private ownership.⁴⁹ It was a process that is described by the author Robert Frizzell in the book *Independent Immigrants, as a *Gemeinheitsteilung** (the division of common lands) that was then also accompanied by a protracted process of *Verkoppelung* (consolidation) in which new estate divisions were then decided upon. In doing so, the traditional norms of Hanover's peasant agriculture were changed from one that often employed multiple divisions of village land among numerous farmers, usually in very long and narrow strips, to one that tried to create larger unified holdings instead.⁵⁰

The result of these redemption laws (that in some areas took decades to complete) together with other state initiatives to modernise farming practices, helped to produce a remarkable 30% increase in the amount of land under cultivation between 1833 and 1853.⁵¹ However, in spite of this success, the *Gemeinheitsteilung* along with the consolidation of peasant farmlands had a markedly negative effect on many farmers who often incurred substantial debt in attempting the redemption of their obligations. For those with the smallest plots and short-term leases, such as the *Heurleute*, the new laws created even greater hardships given that they no longer had access to village commons after the divisions had taken place. As a result, many more villagers were forced into the practice of migratory labour in order to earn sufficiently to be able to care for their families.⁵² Seen together with the long list of other persisting forms of taxation and regional regulations, the economic climate of German states such as Hanover would remain dampened until the advent of Germany's industrialisation in the later nineteenth century. It was only then, once the rapid growth of Germany's urban centres began to take hold, that the problems of over-population and general economic hardships could be adequately countered.⁵³ However, up until this point, the difficult circumstances within Germany's economy as a whole continued to drive increasing numbers of Germans into emigration, who by the mid nineteenth century, began to favour the availability of land in the United States of America, as well as in various European colonial empires across the globe.

⁴⁹ W. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*. 1987. p. 36.

⁵⁰ R. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*. 2007. pp. 14, 16.

⁵¹ W. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*. 1987. p. 26.

⁵² R. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*. 2007. pp. 14, 18; W. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*. 1987. p. 4.

⁵³ R. Tilly, *The German Economy During the Nineteenth Century*. 2004. p. 29.; R. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*. 2007. pp. 12, 16.

Ludwig Harms and the Christian Revival in Hermannsburg

It is within the broader context of Hanover's economic development that the circumstances leading up to the creation of the HMS are given an important additional perspective, or at least, one that extends beyond that which has typically been ascribed to the charismatic influence of its founder, Ludwig Harms.⁵⁴ Even so, it is not without good reason that the story of Harms's life has become synonymous with the founding of the HMS in which Harms is invariably offered the mantle of an extraordinarily pious individual. While it is important to remain cognisant of the fact that most of what we do know of Harms has been based on that which has been published (or archived) by the HMS, the dominant influence that his character came to represent should not be underestimated.⁵⁵ Born in 1808, as the son of a Lutheran pastor, Ludwig Harms spent almost his entire life in and around the landscape of the *Lüneburger Heide*, the flat and open heathland that extends between the river Elbe to the North, Drawhen to the east and Aller to the South and West. It is a region in which the Low German vernacular of *Plattdeutsch* was spoken as the native dialect and in which the agricultural and artisanal lifestyle of its inhabitants had remained dominant over the course of the preceding century.⁵⁶ Here the first years of Ludwig Harms's life experienced the movement of opposing troops in and out of his birth town of Walsrode that formed part of the unfolding drama of the Napoleonic wars. However, it was with his father's reassignment to the not too distant village of Hermannsburg in 1817, that Harms's love of the open landscape, the uncomplicated Low German dialect and its similarly uncomplicated people was said to take shape.⁵⁷

The 27 years that passed between Ludwig Harms's arrival in Hermannsburg and his eventual appointment as its assistant pastor in 1843 are almost always portrayed with an emphasis on his apparently impressive aptitude as a scholar.⁵⁸ Having

⁵⁴ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 33-34, 42; A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 39, 75.

⁵⁵ J. Reller, "Seelsorger, Gemeinde, Mission und Diakonie. Impulse von Ludwig Harms aus Anlass seines 200. Geburtstages." 2009; C. Grundmann, "Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind: Ludwig Harms and the Founding of the Hermannsburg Mission". *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. pp. 381-383.

⁵⁶ C. Grundmann, "Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind: Ludwig Harms and the Founding of the Hermannsburg Mission". *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. p. 383; J. Brammer, *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt*. 1950. pp. 5-6; H. Küster, *Die Entdeckung der Lüneburger Heide als „schöne Natur“*. pp. 5-6

⁵⁷ C. Grundmann, "Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind. *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. pp. 381, 383; A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 49-50

⁵⁸ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 39-40.

completed his primary education in the Hermannsburg private school (that had been both begun and conducted by his father), Harms was next sent to complete his secondary education in the regional capital of Celle before enrolling to study theology at the University of Göttingen, some 150 kilometres to the south.⁵⁹ When seen within this context they were opportunities that, for the most part, were completely out of reach for a normal family in Hermannsburg. In this sense it is worth remembering that while the life of Ludwig Harms was to become representative of the HMS, he himself was by no means representative of its population. Indeed, regardless of any affinity that the Harms family may have shown towards the rural lifestyle of their parishioners, the values of Ludwig Harms and those of his father bore a far truer resemblance to the urban middle classes of the time. They were values in which an emphasis on a further education along with a career in the civil services (of which the church was one) were typically considered the foundations of a successful life. For Ludwig's father, Christian, it was a choice that had been made for him by his own father who, as a trader in the town of Harburg, had determined that his son should enter into a career in the Hanoverian state church or *Landeskirche*. In contrast, young Ludwig had expressed the determination to continue in his father's footsteps, a dream that he was able to realise upon his return to Hermannsburg at the age of 37 to work at his father's side.⁶⁰

While the return of Ludwig Harms to Hermannsburg in 1843 can be regarded as the first in a chain of events that would lead to the formation of the HMS, it was in the years that immediately preceded this period that the full depth of his convictions had almost certainly been found.⁶¹ They were years (fourteen to be precise) that Ludwig had spent working as a tutor to the children of wealthy families in what was then a common practice for newly qualified theologians waiting for a vacancy in the Hanover state church. For Harms it had meant living (for the most part) in the town of Lauenburg on the Elbe River east of Hamburg, where he then also involved himself in a group of local Christian revivalists who took their inspiration from the pietists of the previous century.⁶² Pietism was a movement that, as a whole, had its origins in

⁵⁹ C. Grundmann, "Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind. *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. p. 382.; A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 13-16.

⁶⁰ A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. p. 5.

⁶¹ A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 26-40.

⁶² C. Grundmann, "Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind. *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. pp. 381-382; A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 25-26.; E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 39-40.

the seventeenth century reaction to the European Enlightenment that had placed a new emphasis on human rationalism as opposed to the religious concepts of divinity and faith. Faced with the growing secular challenge and partly in an attempt to remain relevant, the Lutheran Church had responded with an emphasis on doctrinal theology by which it hoped that “absolute (religious) truth could (therefore, also) be arrived at by pure reason”.⁶³ Where the resultant intellectualism that emerged as the dominant force in protestant Germany by the eighteenth century thus seemed to weather the humanist challenge, the increasingly academic nature of church institutions also gave rise to the critique that its faith had thereby become disproportionately theoretical and therefore also impersonal. It was in the light of this predominantly rationalist *zeitgeist* that the Pietist movement emerged to challenge the typically state sanctioned Lutheran orthodoxy with its strong emphasis on personal and emotional experiences of faith.⁶⁴

Although most of the successive generations of German Pietists chose to remain within the fold of the Lutheran Church their efforts to inspire change were mostly viewed with suspicion, if not outright hostility by the conservative main stream.⁶⁵ This was perhaps not surprising given that the original proponents of the Pietist movement had levelled much of their initial criticism at the Lutheran clergy whose supposed “spiritual monopoly over the laity” was famously referred to by the movement’s seventeenth century founder, Philipp Spener, as “a special trick of the cursed devil”.⁶⁶ In contrast Pietism’s aims were kept purposely simple and as such, largely devoid of doctrine, which it was feared would only keep believers in reliance on their own rationalisations as opposed to a more complete surrendering to the will of God. To this end, Spener’s influential treatise, that was published in 1675 under the title *Earnest Desires for a Reform of the True Evangelical Church*, or simply also known as *Pia Desideria*, identifies six points that were deemed necessary for the restoration of what he regarded as a more authentic form of Christian spirituality.⁶⁷ Among these, were the insistence that ordinary people should become active in the

⁶³ D. McKim, *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*. 2003. p. 259; D. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*. 1980. p. 130.

⁶⁴ T. Maschke, “Philip Spener’s *Pia Desideria*”. *Lutheran Quarterly*. 6. no. 2 (Summer 1992). p. 188.

⁶⁵ W. Prout, “Spener and the Theology of Pietism”. *Journal of Bible and Religion*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan. 1947). p. 47.

⁶⁶ T. Maschke, “Philip Spener’s *Pia Desideria*”. *Lutheran Quarterly*. 6. no. 2 (Summer 1992). p. 193; W. Prout, “Spener and the Theology of Pietism”. *Journal of Bible and Religion*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan. 1947). p. 46.

⁶⁷ W. Prout, “Spener and the Theology of Pietism”. *Journal of Bible and Religion*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan. 1947). p. 48.

practice of their faith that, amongst others, required their participation in regular home bible studies. Other points were, however, more specifically aimed at the clergy who Spener argued were in dire need of a more balanced form of “spiritual” training as opposed to that which was typically received as part of intellectualised seminary curriculum. As a last point, Spener impressed the need for all sermons to be conducted as plainly as possible to be able to communicate the importance of practical piety to the congregants effectively.⁶⁸

It is thus when seen in the context of Spener's *Pia Desideria* that the nature of Ludwig Harms's Hermannsburg ministry can be understood. As it was, Harms's return to Hermannsburg had happened under a bit of a cloud, given that he had been serving a suspension or *Predigtverbot* (preaching ban) from the Hanover *Landeskirche*. The transgression had occurred when Harms had led an assembled congregation in an unscripted prayer on the occasion of Queen Friederike's death in 1842. It was an event for which the state church had prepared an official intercession that was to be delivered across the Kingdom on the day of the memorial. For Harms, however, the thought of reading an impersonal prayer had seemed inappropriate which prompted him to cast the script aside and to lead the congregants in spontaneous devotion instead. Although the resultant suspension was eventually revoked it was only on his father's behest that the *Landeskirche* had agreed to his posting as pastor “adjunct” to Hermannsburg by the end of 1843.⁶⁹ While it is quite possible to surmise that the *Landeskirche* leadership had hoped to temper Ludwig Harms's radical nature through the orthodoxy of his father's ministry, or at the very least the relative indifference of the local parishioners. If this was indeed the case then they were soon to be disappointed.⁷⁰

The parish life of Hermannsburg that Ludwig Harms joined in the winter of 1843 had been the cumulative work of his father for over 25 years. At its core, the Sunday morning church services were well attended and the elder Harms had even managed to coax a small number of his congregants back for a second service later in the day. Other than this, and certainly according to Ludwig Harms, the

⁶⁸ T. Maschke, “Philip Spener's *Pia Desideria*”. *Lutheran Quarterly*. 6. no. 2 (Summer 1992). pp. 192-195.

⁶⁹ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 40.

⁷⁰ A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 39-40, 43; C. Grundmann, “Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind. *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. p. 382.

congregation was still lacking in conviction regarding the deeper aspects of Christian spirituality. It was with this in mind, and almost certainly with Spener's *Pia Desideria* as a guide, that Harms began to institute bible studies and question-and-answer sessions in the parsonage, as a sort of *Stubenbesuch* or "lounge-visits", both between and after the two Sunday services.⁷¹ Here, and at every other possible occasion, Harms then also made it his firm principle to converse with the town's folk in Low German, relegating the use of High German to the Sunday sermons. Even then, the sermons that he did preach were said to be of such blunt diction that it led one biographer to remark that while they, (the Sunday sermons) "may have been in High German they had almost certainly been conceived of in *Plattdeutsch*"⁷² (own translation).

If the manner of Harms's communication can be said to have been blunt then the nature of his message was possibly even more so. As an ardent opponent of any rationalised precepts of faith or *Vernunftglauben*, Harms apparently admonished all attempts at spirituality that were not based on a personal experience of the will of God.⁷³ To this effect he remained convinced that the fundamental basis of religion could be grasped without reason, and in fact, would quite probably be all the better for it. It was a straight forward message that could be communicated directly and without ambiguity and it was not long before it began to find its mark. In turn, it is possible to imagine that for the people of Hermannsburg the younger Harms must have been something of a minor celebrity and if not that, then at the very least the source of significant novelty. As a man of no mean education Harms's outspoken perspectives and critique of the status quo would have engendered a powerful fascination that would have been made even stronger by the fact that it was being rendered in the local language. Consequently, word began to spread and in time, the Sunday sermons and discussions began to gather an attentive audience.⁷⁴

It was with these views that Harms's ministry remained at odds to the growth of modern intellectualism in which the rural character of the *Lüneburger Heide* represented a welcome alternative to the rationalisations of theologians in the world

⁷¹ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 40.

⁷² A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. p. 50.

⁷³ W. Bienert, *Kirchengeschichte in ökumenischer Verantwortung: Ausgewählte Studien*. 2009. p. 163.

⁷⁴ C. Grundmann, "Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind. *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. p. 383.

beyond. It stands to reason then that for Harms, Hermannsburg was far more than just an ordinary place in that it offered the necessary simplicity for a truly pious community. To this end, Harms strove towards the creation of an exemplary Christian congregation that was further fuelled by his conviction that the second coming of Christ was soon at hand.⁷⁵ What followed was a renewed enthusiasm for Christian evangelism that began to spread throughout the surrounding region becoming known as the Hermannsburg Revival. At the centre of this growing religious fervour were the Sunday gatherings in Hermannsburg that soon grew into all day affairs and during which time Harms was able to expound upon his convictions of Christian missionary work. It was an interest that as with most of Harms's ministry, had been influenced by pietist views of evangelism to the extent that barely a year after his return to Hermannsburg he had presided over the launch of the *Hermannsburger Hilfsverein* (volunteer association), aimed at providing support to the short lived North German Missionary Society (NM).⁷⁶ However, it was only after his father's death in October 1848, and his own official appointment as Hermannsburg pastor a year later in 1849, that Ludwig Harms began to take the necessary steps that would lead towards the creation of the Hermannsburg Mission Society.⁷⁷

The Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS)

The story of the HMS's origins (according to HMS lore), is that twelve young men from the region (including four who had previously been enrolled in the NM) approached Harms with the request that he train them to become missionaries. While Harms was said to have enquired (unsuccessfully) at various existing missionary societies to negotiate the possibility of their admittance, the extent to which he actually pursued such efforts are now viewed as somewhat questionable.⁷⁸ What is certain, however, is that Harms received the men's requests with a strong sense of purpose that prompted him to purchase an old Hermannsburg farmhouse to convert it into an ad hoc seminary. The result was that on 12 October 1849, the newly formed HMS opened its doors, followed soon thereafter by Ludwig Harms's *Aufstellungspredigt* (inaugural sermon) as the new pastor of Hermannsburg.⁷⁹ In

⁷⁵ A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. p. 54.

⁷⁶ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 40.

⁷⁷ A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 56, 58.

⁷⁸ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 33.

⁷⁹ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 33-34; A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. p. 59.

every respect, the decision to launch a mission society was an audacious initiative for which Harms managed to enlist the services of his younger brother, Theodor, who like him had completed his theological training in Göttingen (1839-1842). Thus, in what can only be imagined as an undertaking of idealistic optimism, work commenced to turn the run-down farm house into a *Missionshaus* that required the candidate missionaries to use the only workable room as their simultaneous sleeping, eating and studying quarters. On top of this, several acres of farmland needed to be tended, both to provide the Mission with a degree of self-sufficiency as too to provide the candidates with a thorough physical component to their training.⁸⁰ In this respect Harms's vision for the HMS stood in marked contrast to those of other seminaries of the time whose requirements placed an almost exclusive emphasis on the intellectual abilities of their students. As it was, most of the local Hermannsburg candidates had neither the money nor the necessary secondary education to have been able to contemplate enrolling in such established programmes. Yet, to Ludwig Harms, it was precisely the simplicity of his candidates' humble origins, along with their non-rational faith, that he believed made them uniquely suitable for his vision of a *Heidenmission* (heathen mission).⁸¹

It was with this precept of a *Bauernmission* or farmer's mission that Ludwig Harms believed the people of the *Lüneburger Heide* to be uniquely suited to the demands of a Christian mission to Africa. In doing so, Harms drew upon various elements of German history that included his own long held fascination with the history of the early Germanic inhabitants of Lower Saxony. This included books such as *Germania*, written by the first century Roman historian Tacitus, which Harms, like many other romanticists of his generation, savoured for the proto-Germanic identity that its pages seemed to represent.⁸² They were descriptions that in their own right, formed part of a broader nineteenth century trend in the development of German *völkisch* (ethnic) nationalism⁸³ and that thereby also formed an important part of Harms's Sunday *Stubenbesuch* gatherings.

⁸⁰ H. Harms, *Concern for the Unreached. Life and Work of Louis Harms, founder of the Hermannsburg Mission*. 1999. p. 24; E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 34-35.

⁸¹ A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. p. 60.

⁸² B. Zulu, *From the Lüneburger Heide to Northern Zululand*. (Masters Dissertation) University of Natal. 2002. p. 54; C. Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book*. 2011. pp. 182-186.

⁸³ H. Harms, *Concern for the Unreached. Life and Work of Louis Harms, founder of the Hermannsburg Mission*. 1999. pp. 32, 36; A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. p. 10; J. Glover, *Humanity. A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*. 2001. p. 320.

Thus, it was in keeping with this interest that Harms also drew upon another popular element of Lower Saxony's *Heimatgeschichte* (local history), namely the attempted conversion of its Germanic inhabitants by Celtic missionaries during the sixth and seventh centuries. These, having originated in the relative seclusion of Irish Christianity following the collapse of the Roman Empire, had been partly responsible for the conversion of Anglo-Saxon England before moving south into the European continent. It was here, in the region of Saxony, that the so-called Hiberno-Scottish mission had continued its Benedictine tradition by establishing monastic communities from which its brethren worked to evangelise the surrounding population.⁸⁴ Although the Celtic nature of the mission was soon replaced by the more dominant elements of both Anglo-Saxon and Frankish Christianity, the influence of the *Schottenklöster* (Celtic monasteries) remained an important part of the popular consciousness regarding Germany's eventual Christianisation.⁸⁵ For Harms, they were narratives that had inspired his earliest conceptions of the Christian mission to which he then looked when conceiving his vision for the HMS. In this respect, a key aspect in Harms's missiology was the role that he perceived Christianity had played in the development of modern German civilisation, as revealed in the following quote as mentioned by one of Harms's biographers Arno Pagel:

*Wenn ich dann weiter las, wie das ganze heidnische Deutschland ein fast ununterbrochener Wald und Sumpf ohne Städte und Dörfer gewesen ist, wie die Menschen fast nackt, den wilden Tieren gleich, in den Wäldern umhergelaufen seien, dann staunte ich schon als Knabe über die wunderbaren Wirkungen des Christentums.*⁸⁶

When I read on, and learnt how the whole of heathen Germany had been a virtually unbroken landscape of forests and swamps, without cities and towns and how its people ran around the forests half naked like wild animals, then even as a young boy I was amazed at the wonderful effects of Christianity.
(own translation)

⁸⁴ E. Norman, *The Roman Catholic Church: An Illustrated History*. 2007. pp. 46-47; H. Harms, *Concern for the Unreached: Life and Work of Louis Harms Founder of the Hermannsburg Mission*. 1999. p. 31.

⁸⁵ C. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*. 2015. pp. 50, 56-58.

⁸⁶ A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 10-11.

It was from this perception of Germany's pagan tribes as being representative of a noble but nonetheless barbaric and uncivilised culture that Harms developed his not dissimilar perspective of the unconverted population of Africa.⁸⁷ Accordingly, and in direct reference to the Hiberno-Scottish Mission, Harms decided that the HMS missionaries' goal would be the creation of monastic communities in a suitable location in Africa from which to effect the conversion of its "heathen" societies. To this end, and in another contrast to other missionary societies of the day, all of the prospective twelve missionaries were intended to be stationed in a single community where, after a functioning mission had been established, some of their number would journey a short distance away to repeat the process. In doing so Harms envisaged being able to create a network of Christian communities with which to inspire the surrounding peoples towards the adoption of the Christian faith; and he imagined, enable them to appropriate what he regarded as the benefits of Christian civilisation.⁸⁸

While this cultural component of Harms's ostensibly spiritual mission was to go on to play a pivotal part in the history of the HMS's self-perception, it is nevertheless important to remain cognisant of the fact that Harms was by no means supportive of European civilisation as a whole. In particular, Harms's perception of Europe's colonial empire was one that he bluntly regarded as a case of "*Betrug und offner Raub*" (betrayal and blatant robbery) in which he believed that the value of Africa's material wealth was being prioritised to the detriment of the spiritual growth of its population.⁸⁹ In contrast, Harms believed that the true nature of Africa's identity would only be realised through the adoption of the Christian faith via the practical demonstration of a devout lifestyle.⁹⁰ To achieve this goal the missionaries would be expected to be wholly self sufficient, not only to demonstrate the virtues of hard work but also, and just as importantly, to allow the chosen mission field to be selected beyond the established boundaries of European colonialism. It was, therefore, with

⁸⁷ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsbürger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 48.

⁸⁸ H. J. Oschadleus, "Lutherans, Germans, Hermannsburgers", *Natalia* 22 (1992), p. 31.

⁸⁹ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsbürger Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1890-1939*. 1988. pp. 34-35.

⁹⁰ H. Harms, *Concern for the Unreached. Life and Work of Louis Harms, founder of the Hermannsburg Mission*. 1999. p. 51; F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsbürger Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1890-1939*. 1988. pp. 34-35.

this vision of a practical and communal Christian mission that Harms endeavoured to prepare his *Zöglinge* (pupils) for the task that lay ahead.⁹¹

Although it is essentially impossible to gauge to what extent the first HMS candidates would have been able to pre-empt either the exact nature or even the ultimate goal of their training, it is possible to surmise that to some of them it must have come as a shock. As it was, the daily programme began promptly with a devotion at six o'clock every morning after which academic lessons were scheduled between eight and eleven and thereafter four to six in the afternoon, with a last lesson taking place from nine till ten at night. The time between lunch at midday and the recommencement of lessons at four in the afternoon were then assigned for work on the HMS's buildings and fields. In the classroom the lessons ranged from church history to bible studies or rather "bible explanations" (*Bibelerklärung*) that remained principally focused on the books of Genesis and Romans.⁹² In accordance to Harms's emphasis on practicality (and because of his candidates' typically meagre foundational education), the old theological languages of Latin, Hebrew and Greek were replaced by lessons in English and German as these were deemed to have greater usefulness in their daily application. Other subjects included singing along with lessons in the playing of brass wind instruments that underscored the strong tradition of music that had become a key aspect of the Hermannsburg church. Finally, the candidates were also expected to attend all church services, catechism lessons and bible studies during which they were frequently called upon to answer questions from the congregation.⁹³

As an organisation that was entirely dependent on the donations of the surrounding community the HMS's candidates could have been under no illusion that their graduation from the seminary would have entitled them to a salary. In contrast, and once the details of Harms's vision for an African mission had been established, the prospective missionaries would have been informed that their posting into the field would be in the form of a self-sufficient monastic community. To this extent, anything other than an individual's most immediate possessions were considered communal property in what was, therefore, soon dubbed as "practical communism".⁹⁴ This

⁹¹ C. Steinert, Towards a "Liturgical Missiology": Perspectives on Music in Lutheran Mission Work in South Africa. (Doctoral Thesis) 2003. p. 102; F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika*. 1988. pp. 30-31.

⁹² E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 37, 63.

⁹³ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 37.

⁹⁴ H. Winkler, The Divided Roots of Lutheranism in South Africa. (Masters Dissertation), 1989. p. 21.

presumably was a loose reference to Karl Marx and Friederich Engels' "Communist Manifesto" that had been published the year before in 1848.⁹⁵ Similarly, and with regard to his students' private lives, Harms expected his missionaries to forgo the idea of marriage, primarily to enable them to devote themselves entirely to their evangelical mission, but also because the uncertainty of what might await them in Africa would make it imprudent for them to be accompanied by women.⁹⁶ Given the severity and sheer unconventionality of Harms's approach it is perhaps not surprising that of the four candidates who had enrolled from the North German Missionary Society, two of their number opted not to complete their training citing the conditions in the HMS seminary as being "unbearable" (the other two candidates both died after succumbing to illnesses in 1851 and 1853 respectively).⁹⁷ In response, Harms proceeded publicly to chastise the abandonment by these candidates in the HMS's annual newsletter, calling them "unfaithful" and praying that God might forgive them their "sin".⁹⁸ It was a reaction that was ultimately characteristic of Harms's ministry in which any challenge to his authority was regarded as a challenge to the (divine) authority of his ordination and, therefore, an affront to God. In the same manner, Harms made it his business to confront any wrong-doing from the conspicuous platform of the church pulpit that when seen together, enforced a very public and paternalistic method of control over his congregants. Although this exercise of absolute personal authority was met with snide condemnation by his critics, Harms remained steadfastly convicted to the justification of an anti-democratic and hierarchical structure of his church leadership.⁹⁹

Then, it was in September 1851, after almost two years of deliberating about a possible destination for the HMS and approximately half way through the candidates' training, that Ludwig Harms came across an idea that captured his imagination.¹⁰⁰ It

⁹⁵ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsbürger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 49; H. Winkler, *The Divided Roots of Lutheranism in South Africa*. (Masters Dissertation), 1989. p. 21.

⁹⁶ R. Elphick & R. Davenport (ed.) *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*. 1997. p. 93.

⁹⁷ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsbürger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 34-35, 45-46.

⁹⁸ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsbürger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 34-35, 45-46; A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. p. 53.

⁹⁹ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsbürger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 34-35, 45-46.; A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. p. 53.

¹⁰⁰ E. Bauernochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland, Anfänge der Hermannsbürger Missionsarbeit in Äthiopien*. 2006. p. 44

was an article that had been written by the German explorer and Missionary Ludwig Krapf and published in the journal of the Basel Missionary Society, giving a report on his and his associate, Johannes Rebmann's, recent expedition to Africa. In it Krapf detailed his encounter with the Oromo or "Galla" tribe of the East African interior (present day southern Ethiopia)¹⁰¹ that seemed to provide a compelling answer to Harms's question of a suitable destination:

Die Galla-Nation ist in zahlreiche Stammabteilungen zerschnitten; aber die Einheit in Sprache, Religion, Sitten, überwiegt doch. Ihre Bekehrung würde in Ostafrika einen unberechenbar gewaltigen Einfluß üben. Ich bin fest überzeugt, dass die göttliche Leitung der Völker diese Nation für einen großen Zweck gerade hierher gestellt hat. Es ist das Deutschland von Afrika. Denkt man sich das alte Germanien, so trifft fast jeder Zug seiner Volkseigentümlichkeit mit diesem afrikanischen Urgermanien zusammen

The Galla-nation is divided into numerous tribes; although the unity of language, religion and customs nonetheless serve to provide a sense of unity. Their conversion would have an incalculably powerful effect in East Africa. I am firmly convinced that the people of this nation have been purposely placed here so as to be spiritually led to the achievement of a great purpose. They are the Germany of Africa. If one tries to imagine ancient Germania then one encounters virtually all of the same ethnic/völkisch characteristics among these primitive Africans. (Own translation)

With Harms's interest in Lower Saxony's *Heimatgeschichte* in mind, it is not difficult to imagine how the words of Krapf would have made an enormous impact on his perception of this new destination for the HMS mission. For a man who placed such overwhelming emphasis on faith, the idea of a call to missionise the "Germany of Africa" must have seemed little short of divine providence. Thus, where Harms had previously contemplated the West African slave coast as a possible destination for the HMS, the new information quickly put paid to these ideas. Consequently, Harms wrote to the Hamburg businessman and Hermannsburg enthusiast, Johann Nagel, (whom he had already consulted regarding the availability of ships sailing to West Africa) to ask him to investigate the routes of shipping to the African east coast

¹⁰¹ W. Proske, The Political Significance of the Early Hermannsburg Mission to Botswana: An Assessment of its Role Among the Batswana, the British and the Boers. *Botswana Notes and Records*. Volume 22. 1990. p. 43.

instead.¹⁰² Citing his reasons, Harms included the fact that unlike West Africa, the eastern interior had not yet come into the reach of European expansionism, although, as Harms went on to explain, this would almost certainly begin to change. Accordingly, Harms saw the HMS as coming to the defence of the “poor heathens” (*die armen Heiden*)¹⁰³ in a way that might offer them the means with which to resist the encroachment of colonialism on their lands. It was a perspective that was based on his belief that only Christianity would be able to offer the necessary catalyst with which to bring about an authentic form of independent statehood. In this way, Harms intended the HMS to create the impetus for an African (Christian) kingdom that would be free of European overlordship and in so-doing, capable of developing the unique expression of both its own cultural and national identity.¹⁰⁴ Expanding upon this perspective Harms was further convinced of the need for strict self-reliance of his missionaries whom he instructed not to engage in commercial (and therefore also colonial) enterprises. As such, the work of the *Bauernmission* was intended to evangelise the “unrefined heathens” (*stumpfen Heiden*) through the missionaries’ demonstration of farming and artisanship, reinforcing the idea that a practical Christian lifestyle was just as important as any verbal confession of faith.¹⁰⁵

If Harms’s prayers for a suitable destination for the HMS seemed to have been answered, then the organisation’s ability to reach this area proved to be more complicated. It followed that after numerous attempts to obtain further information about the logistics of shipping to the east African region, Ludwig Harms set upon yet another unusual solution that had been suggested to him by a Hamburg sailor, namely, simply to commission and equip a ship for the HMS. While the suggestion seemed an improbable if not entirely ludicrous idea at first, it soon became obvious that such an initiative would offer various important advantages. To begin with, the cumulative fares of transporting large numbers of people and supplies to Africa would quickly have amounted to a comparable sum to the actual building of a ship. Added to this, its ownership could be offset by carrying commercial freight both in conjunction and in-between the HMS’s voyages and, so doing, soon be able to pay

¹⁰² I. Wegener, *Zwischen Mut und Demut*. 2004. p. 336.; E. Bauernochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland, Anfänge der Hermannsbürger Missionsarbeit in Äthiopien*. 2006. pp. 42-44.

¹⁰³ A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 30, 89.

¹⁰⁴ E. Bauernochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland, Anfänge der Hermannsbürger Missionsarbeit in Äthiopien*. 2006. pp. 43-44; C. Grundmann, “Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind. *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. p. 385.

¹⁰⁵ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika*. 1988. p. 31; C. Grundmann, “Mission in Simplicity of Heart and Mind. *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4, October 2012. p. 386.

for itself. On top of this and certainly not least of all, Harms had recently also decided to expand the original conception of the HMS mission by beginning with the recruitment of laymen “colonists” who were to accompany the missionaries to Africa.¹⁰⁶ It was a decision that was not only intended to provide practical support for the missionaries, but more importantly, to be able to create a fully-fledged Christian congregation from the outset of the mission. In this manner, Harms intended to expedite the conversion of the African population who would be able to join and learn from a functioning congregation and thereby forgo the gradual process of having to build their own.¹⁰⁷ In all, with the rapid expansion of the HMS’s community, and the persistent difficulties in finding other suitable options, the building of a ship soon became a feasible alternative. The result was that with numerous donations, and almost certainly a substantial amount of trepidation, the HMS’s ship was commissioned and building began in the docks of Hamburg on the southern banks of the Elbe River by 1853.¹⁰⁸

With the construction of the ship underway, life in Hermannsburg and the HMS seminary would have taken on an added air of anticipation. Indeed, Harms’s decision to enlist colonists in support of the mission had been met with such an overwhelming response that he was faced with an arduous task of deciding who to assign to the eight places that had been made available. As with the missionaries, it was determined only to include unmarried men in the venture, all of whose Christian convictions were scrutinised during a trial period before the final names were announced. Once approved, these candidates included two blacksmiths, a painter, a builder, tailor and three farmers, all of whom were specifically chosen for their ability to contribute to the self-sustainability of the mission.¹⁰⁹ It followed that within the matter of a few short years the location of Hermannsburg had experienced the remarkable transition from that of a sleepy village into a popular centre of the north German Christian revival. While this certainly seems to pay testimony to the power of Ludwig Harms’s message, it also seems evident that the opportunity of its (untested) expedition was more than enough to attract substantial numbers of applicants willing to embark upon what effectively amounted to a form of sponsored emigration.

¹⁰⁶ E. Bauernochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland, Anfänge der Hermannsburger Missionsarbeit in Äthiopien*. 2006. pp. 45-46.

¹⁰⁷ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 48-49.

¹⁰⁸ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 49.

¹⁰⁹ G. Meyer, *die Pflege der deutsche Sprache im Westlichen Transvaal*. (M.A. Thesis) 1956. p. 9.

While the reputation of Hermannsburg had indeed grown into something of a phenomenon within the surrounding area, the HMS and its unorthodox seminary were certainly not welcomed by all. In particular, those in positions of church authority, including others from the general population who were disinclined to follow Harms's Pietist approach to the Lutheran faith, were quick to level all manner of complaints at these developments.¹¹⁰ In turn, when Harms had initially approached the Hanover *Landeskirche* (state church) with a view to incorporating the HMS into the church's fold, he was informed that the State Church viewed the HMS and its seminary as a strictly private initiative. Subsequent requests by Harms to have his missionaries tested and ordained by the *Landeskirche* were likewise refused on grounds that ranged from "legal" concerns to the declaration that the removal of the ancient languages from the candidates' training represented an "insurmountable deficiency" in their education.¹¹¹ It was a potentially debilitating blow for the HMS candidates who, by mid 1853, were only months away from the completion of their training. In response, Harms petitioned the independent consistory in the neighbouring region of Stade who, unlike their contemporaries in Hanover, agreed to take on the examination and ordination of the aspirant missionaries. It followed that on the 14th and 15th of September 1853, six of the eight HMS seminarians successfully completed a two day examination and were thereafter ordained as missionaries. The remaining two candidates, who had not fared quite as well, were nevertheless deemed fit to serve as *Kategesenämter* (teachers of religion) and could thereby join the others in preparations for their departure for Africa.¹¹²

The triumph of the candidates' ordination was followed less than two weeks later by the launch of the HMS's ship that had been christened "Candace" in reference to the biblical queen of Ethiopia (Acts 8:27). It was certainly an astounding accomplishment for the little community of Hermannsburg to have achieved and it is, therefore, not surprising that the ship was quickly adopted as the symbol of the HMS that remains to this day.¹¹³ As for the HMS missionaries, little time remained for them to be equipped for their voyage that, although they were to be placed in the hands of a

¹¹⁰ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 36; A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. p. 64.

¹¹¹ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. p. 38.

¹¹² A. Walz, *Der Hardealand-Konflikt und die Botswana-Mission* (Masters Dissertation), Missionshochschule in Stavanger. 2013. p. 12.; E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 44-45; E. Bauernochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland, Anfänge der Hermannsburger Missionsarbeit in Äthiopien*. 2006. p. 47.

¹¹³ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 49.

salaried captain and crew, must have been a daunting prospect all the same. Therefore, while the twin masted *Candace* was being fitted out to be declared seaworthy, the Hermannsburg community rallied to the assistance of its new missionaries. Inventories of shoes and work implements were cobbled and smithied by the town's artisans, while women sewed clothes and prepared the food that would be required for the coming months at sea. Dried apples and pears, sacks of flour, wheat and rye, potatoes, sausages and ham and even live chickens and pigs were all offered up by the surrounding community. The town's cooper fashioned the ships water casks and in the midst of it all, a thoughtful congregant even wheeled in a potted pine tree to enable the missionaries to celebrate Christmas whilst at sea.¹¹⁴

With the preparations completed, the sixteen HMS missionaries and colonists assembled in the Hermannsburg church for a final commissioning and farewell on the twentieth of October. It was an occasion that Harms used to remind them of their loyalty to the HMS and, therefore, also the Hanover State Church¹¹⁵ as later expressed by Theodor Harms with the following words:

*...daß sie als Lutheraner, Deutsche und Hermannsbürger draußen ihre Pflicht zu tun haben. Die Lutherische Lehre, das reine Wort Gottes sollen sie zu den Heiden tragen, deutsche Sprache und deutsche Sitte als Kleinod festhalten und als Hermannsbürger demütig zu jedem Dienst bereit sein, damit sie ihren Glauben nicht nur mit dem Munde, sondern auch mit der Tat bekennen.*¹¹⁶

...to approach their duties as Lutherans, Germans and Hermannsburgers. They were to carry the Lutheran confession and the pure word of God to the heathens. They were to treasure and maintain the German language and customs, and as Hermannsburgers, they were to be ready to tackle each task ahead of them with humility so that they would bear testimony to their faith, not only through their words but also through their actions.¹¹⁷
(Own translation)

¹¹⁴ A. Pagel, *Ludwig Harms, Gottes Rufer in der Heide*. 1958. pp. 61-62.

¹¹⁵ A. Walz, *Der Hardealand-Konflikt und die Botswana-Mission* (Masters Dissertation), Missionshochschule in Stavanger. 2013. p. 13.

¹¹⁶ J. Barmer. *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt. Ein Lebensbild des Betschuanenmissionars Wilhelm Behrens*. 1950. p. 14.

¹¹⁷ The inclusion of this passage is debatable given that it is taken from the account of Theodor Harms's address to the next group of HMS missionaries to embark the *Candace* in 1857. Various sources do, however, quote this or a similar passage in some relation to the first HMS missionaries. (See Leuschke, 1992)

Looking back, one can only imagine the poignancy of the farewell for the HMS missionaries. Unlike those of other European missionary organisations of the time, they were not sent with an expectation that they would return to Germany.¹¹⁸ Indeed, given the uncertain nature of the expedition, the call to guard their German language and customs would have been a powerful sentiment, and certainly not least because of the way their Germanness was thus equated to the physical embodiment of their Christian faith. It was an uncertainty that was not either lost on Ludwig Harms who, in spite of his anti-colonial convictions had nevertheless sought out the protective sanction of the British Empire. In doing so, he was able to hand his missionaries a small consignment of endorsements that had been procured through the mediation of the Hanover Foreign Ministry. Among them were papers from the British Colonial Office requesting that the British stations in South and East Africa should “treat the Hermannsburg missionaries and their ship as though they were English”.¹¹⁹ And yet, despite the pre-emptiveness of these provisions, Harms had nevertheless been convinced to forgo any insurance on the ship, believing instead that the fate of its voyage was solely in the hands of God.¹²⁰ With these formalities having been completed the missionaries and their colonists duly departed for Hamburg where, less than a week later, they put to sea with the outgoing tide on 28 October 1853.¹²¹

The first voyage of the *Candace* that struck out into the wintery North Sea must have carried a mixture of emotions for all those aboard. As a maiden voyage, the ship was largely untested and with a new crew and a full hold the captain would have had his share of foreboding at the venture that lay ahead. For the HMS passengers, the dramatic change from the life that they had known on the earth-bound heathlands to the unnerving upheaval of a ship on the ocean is difficult to contemplate. However, for all the trepidation that the voyage may have evoked the promise of a new beginning and those of countless new experiences must, nevertheless, have fuelled a palpable sense of anticipation. In spite of this, the HMS missionaries remained dutiful in their observance of both the morning and afternoon Sunday church services along with the customary mid-week service, Saturday evening vespers and

¹¹⁸ H. Winkler, *The Divided Roots of Lutheranism in South Africa*. (Masters Dissertation), 1989. p. 25.

¹¹⁹ E. Bauernochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland, Anfänge der Hermannsburg Mission in Äthiopien*. 2006. p. 48. (Own translation).

¹²⁰ J. Barmer. *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt. Ein Lebensbild des Betschuanenmissionars Wilhelm Behrens*. 1950. p. 15.

¹²¹ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburg Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 50.

daily devotions.¹²² In turn, for Ludwig Harms, returning to his parsonage on the Lüneburger Heath, life after the sending off would have become a passage of time waiting for news from a land that he had never seen. Indeed, it would be at least six months before the first news arrived in Hermannsburg in the form of letters from Cape Town. In them, Harms learnt that the *Candace* had made her landfall on 21 January 1854 into a howling south easterly wind that had hampered the crews' attempts to dock for a full two days while in sight of Table Mountain and the harbour.¹²³ It was an attempt in which the ship had lost both her anchors and for which, in lieu of the cost of their replacement, the captain had made the decision to take on additional freight to Port Natal. The decision had meant a further delay of at least two weeks during which time the passengers had been housed by members of Cape Town's German Lutheran congregation. It was a stay during which the HMS missionaries described the Cape landscape in their letters as being "*paradiesisch*" (akin to paradise) but, as according to the scholar Alexander Walz, nevertheless slated the state of its (Christian) spirituality as being mournful.¹²⁴

The weeks that followed brought more letters, this time from Port Natal where the HMS missionaries had been greeted by another congregation of local Germans. These had taken notice of the *Candace* as she was being docked due to the Lutheran hymns that the missionaries had been playing on deck at the time and therefore had invited the company to join them for a visit. Here the HMS missionaries were introduced to Wilhelm Posselt of the Berlin Missionary Society who had spent almost a decade working amongst the Xhosa people on the Eastern Cape frontier before re-establishing himself in Natal.¹²⁵ It was a relatively short but nonetheless influential visit during which time Posselt effected something of an introduction to the Zulu language and culture for the Hermannsburgers. As it was, their arrival in Port Natal had been the first encounter that the HMS missionaries and colonists had had with Black Africans and their initial reactions (to the people they had ostensibly come to serve) is interesting to note. This was documented by author Ernst Bauernochse, from a letter by Missionary Wilhelm Kohrs:

¹²² E. Röhrs, *Der Hermannsbürger Missionskolonist Hans Heinrich Röhrs und seine Nachkommen in Südafrika. 1862-2002*. 2002. p. 9.

¹²³ A. Walz, *Der Hardeland-Konflikt und die Botswana-Mission* (Masters Dissertation), Missionshochschule in Stavanger. 2013. p. 14.

¹²⁴ A. Walz, *Der Hardeland-Konflikt und die Botswana-Mission* (Masters Dissertation), Missionshochschule in Stavanger. 2013. p. 14.

¹²⁵ University of KwaZulu-Natal. *Campbell Collections*. <<http://campbell.ukzn.ac.za/?q=node/22130>> Access: 2016-06-17.

Port Natal war auch der Ort, wo ich den ersten schwarzen nackten Heiden gesehen habe, und zwar sah ich ihn eher, als wir in den Hafen kamen; oh wie manches mal habe ich daran gedacht in Missions-Hause, was das für ein herzdurchschneidender Anblick sein würde, und ich kann auch wirklich nicht sagen, wie mir zu Muthe war. Denn da stand er in der Ferne am Berge, vor seiner Kleinen Hütte, die den deutschen Bienenkörben gleicht und, daß unten an der Erde das Loch ist, wo sie auf den Knien hineinkriechen... Dieser stand in der Ferne, so daß man nur sehen konnte seine schwarze Haut und seine Nacktheit, es dauerte aber nicht lange, ungefähr eine viertel Stunde, da lagen wir im Hafen und waren nahe bei den armen schwarzen Kaffern¹²⁶, wo wir dann sahen, daß sie da mitten zwischen Weißen liefen, die sich Christen nannten, und zum Teil ganz nackt und bloß, so wie sie auf die Welt gekommen waren, einige hatten kleine Läppchen um die Hüfte gebunden und etliche hatten auch alte Hemden oder Kittel an; aber christlich bekleidet sah man auch nicht einen.¹²⁷

Port Natal was also the first place where I saw a naked black heathen and I already spotted him as we were entering into the harbour. Oh, how I had at times imagined, while still in the *Missionshaus* (seminary), what a heartbreaking sight it would be, and I truly cannot tell you how I felt; for there he stood, at a distance on the hill in front of his little hut that looks like a German beehive, only bigger, with the hole at the bottom by the ground, where they crawl inside on their knees. This man stood at some distance that one could only see the blackness of his skin and his nakedness. However, it did not take long, about a quarter of an hour, and we were in the harbour and close enough to the poor Blacks to see that there were Whites walking in amongst them who called themselves Christians. They (the blacks) were almost totally naked, just as they had been when they had been brought into the world, and some had tied a small cloth around their waist while a few were wearing old shirts or smocks; but not one to be seen in Christian clothing.
(Own translation)

While these initial observations speak volumes about the cultural-religious world view with which the HMS missionaries arrived in Africa, they also highlight the lack of

¹²⁶ This term, now regarded as a form of hate-speech, has been translated into English as “Black” for the purposes of this thesis.

¹²⁷ E. Bauernochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland, Anfänge der Hermannsburger Missionsarbeit in Äthiopien*. 2006. p. 48.

their previous exposure to anything other than the familiar terrain of northern Germany. In this sense, it drives home something of the sheer audacity (or perhaps better ignorance) with which the Hermannsburg venture was undertaken. With virtually no knowledge of the regions and cultures that they were to encounter, let alone any form of specific preparation other than a definite sense of cultural superiority, wrapped as it were, in the religiosity of their purpose, the HMS missionaries can only have been astounded by the world as it unfolded around them.

It was then a little less than two weeks later that the *Candace* put back to sea with the intention of reaching the island of Zanzibar and what was hoped would be the penultimate stop on their journey. Sailing north through the azure waters above the Mozambican channel the crew initially missed sighting the island before circling back to dock a little less than a month after leaving Port Natal.¹²⁸ Here too it is worth remembering that at the time of the *Candace*'s arrival in Zanzibar, Ludwig Harms would at best only just have received word of his missionaries' safe arrival in Cape Town. It is with these restrictions of communication in mind that the fledgling HMS missionaries were given the bad news that the Imam of Muscat, who then still presided over much of the East African coastline, had forbidden any further incursion by European missionaries into his territories. As it happened, the Imam himself, Sa'id bin Sultan, was scheduled to depart Zanzibar for Muscat a few days later and before the Hermannsburgers were able to gain an audience. Therefore, left with availing themselves to the Imam's son, the HMS missionaries were graciously received and while eventually allowed to sail on to Mombasa, nevertheless still refused access to proceed beyond the port and into the mainland.¹²⁹

With this glimmer of hope the HMS company decided to proceed on to Mombasa where it was thought that they might still be received with amicable acquiescence and where they were under the impression the British Empire had a more dominant influence. However, arriving in Mombassa more than a month later (with the same hymns and accompanying brass wind instruments as they entered port) the missionaries were met with the similarly polite yet dogged refusal by the Sultan's governor who had not yet received any word from Zanzibar that they had been granted permission to lay at anchor in Mombasa. With the mission now hanging on a thread, the HMS missionaries were allowed to send a dispatch to missionary

¹²⁸ E. Bauernochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland, Anfänge der Hermannsburger Missionsarbeit in Äthiopien*. 2006. p. 52.

¹²⁹ A. Walz, *Der Hardeiland-Konflikt und die Botswana-Mission* (Masters Dissertation), Missionshochschule in Stavanger. 2013. pp. 15-16; M. Isaac, *A Historical Atlas of Oman*. 2004. p. 37.

Rebmann who, as a colleague of Missionary Krapf, had been allowed to remain in the region and whose residence lay approximately five hours outside of the city. It was then, on Rebmann's arrival the following day, that the HMS missionaries' request to proceed into the interior was thoroughly mediated, but as before, declined by the governor. With little hope remaining, the HMS missionaries and colonists toyed with the idea of sailing further up the coast to find a new point of access, but on further investigation regarding the extent of the Imam's Sultanate were soon dissuaded of this as a viable initiative. Following a last attempt by three of the missionaries to proceed inland without permission, that was likewise soon thwarted, the enraged governor demanded their immediate departure. Therefore, with no options left and after almost a month in Mombasa, the HMS missionaries reluctantly heeded Rebmann's advice to return to Port Natal in order to consolidate their plans and even if only in the interim, to begin a mission station among the Zulu.¹³⁰

It followed that after six months of travel at sea and an approximate further three months in various ports along the way, the *Candace* arrived back in Port Natal with its dejected passengers. Not surprisingly, the letters that were now being sent back to Harms contained references to significant tensions within the group and the possibility that some of its members might strike out on their own. However, overall the HMS missionaries seemed concerned with explaining their situation to Harms to whom they were still duty bound to look to for authority. It was therefore, in September 1854 that Ludwig Harms was able to report back to the Hermannsburg community that the HMS missionaries' attempt to reach the Oromo in East Africa had failed, and that they now found themselves in the English colony of Port Natal. In subsequent reports, that were published as part of the HMS monthly newsletter, Harms went on to express his disappointment at the missionaries' failure to find a way around the Mombasa officials despite the fact that had they managed to do so, they would have been severed from all contact to Germany and quite possibly have been endangering their lives. In this respect, Harms continued to maintain the hope that another attempt in the following years would be possible and that above all, God's will was still at work in the outcome of the venture.¹³¹

¹³⁰ E. Bauernochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland, Anfänge der Hermannsburger Missionsarbeit in Äthiopien*. 2006. pp. 53-56, 59; A. Walz, *Der Hardeland-Konflikt und die Botswana-Mission* (Masters Dissertation), Missionshochschule in Stavanger. 2013. pp. 16-17.

¹³¹ E. Bauernochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland, Anfänge der Hermannsburger Missionsarbeit in Äthiopien*. 2006. pp. 60-62.

As the unavoidable lag in communication between Harms in Germany and the HMS missionaries in Port Natal dragged out, the circumstances for the missionaries nevertheless required some form of action. Accordingly, it was decided to purchase a piece of land upon which to establish themselves and from which they could take the necessary steps to begin work among the local population. However, their attempt to approach the colonial authority for land on the Zululand border was swiftly denied after it had come to light that the HMS missionaries' stay Mombasa had been marred by their insubordination to the authorities there. Accordingly, having been branded as potential troublemakers the HMS missionaries and their colonists proceeded with a private purchase of a farm in the Umvoti district that belonged to one of the local German congregants. In all it was a protracted process in which the necessary funds had to be requested from Harms in Germany with the result that ownership of the land, previously registered under the name 'Perseverance', was only conveyed to the HMS on 23 July 1855. Therefore, with a property soon to be in hand and permission from its owner to begin their settlement ahead of the completion of the sale, the group of Hermannsburgers made the decision to take ownership of the site. Thus, after a number of weeks of preparation, the group of sixteen undertook the journey of approximately 160 km by ox-wagon upon which they arrived on the farm (that lay 100 km due north of Port Natal) in September 1854. Wasting little time, the missionaries and their colonists set to work to erect a communal building, that upon its completion a year later was dubbed the *Missionshaus* (Mission's house/ seminary), and that was built in the distinctive style of the farm houses of Lower Saxony. The site itself was proudly named "New Hermannsburg".¹³²

The arrival of the HMS in Natal in 1854 marks the beginning of only one chapter of German immigration and settlement in what would eventually become South Africa. Yet, it was an occurrence that due to its distinctive circumstances, eventually became representative of much of South African Germanness in general. At its core the identity of the first HMS missionaries and colonists, who would be followed by well over a 100 more by 1900,¹³³ was focused upon the relatively narrow convictions of their world view that were bound to the auspices of the HMS. As such, the HMS arrived in Africa with the express desire not to integrate into colonial society or (at first) even to partake in the rudiments of its economy. In contrast, its mission was effectively to transplant German communities in their entirety to Africa with the view

¹³² A. Leuschke, "The Hermannsburg Mission Society in Natal and Zululand". *Lantern*. Special Edition: The German Contribution to the Development of SA, Feb. 1992. pp. 56-57.

¹³³ W. Volker, *Hermannsburg Missionaries*. (online database). <http://www.safrika.org/hmbmiss_en.html> Access: 19/08/2016.

of establishing living examples of 'authentic' Christian German culture. To this end, the Hermannsburgers remained keenly aware that their duty was to hold fast to both their religious faith and their cultural norms that thereby easily became intertwined to mean one and the same. They are sentiments that author Daniel Walther, when writing about the Germans of colonial South West Africa, likened to their being "forced onto a stage" upon which they were required to "demonstrate their superiority" in front of the native population.¹³⁴ Although the circumstances that separated these two groupings (the Germans of SWA and the HMS) remain quite significant, the sentiments in Walther's observation hold a distinct relevance for the German South African community. In this sense, the HMS missionaries and colonists quite naturally sought to replicate the conditions of their lives in Hannover with the aim of creating a new Hermannsburg from which to continue the work of the *Erweckung* (awakening) that had been begun in Germany. It was a world view that in the absence of a still dormant political (national) alternative, thereby, equated Hermannsburg to Germany and as such, its settlement as the political and spiritual centre of its existence. This is expressed by the author Wolfgang Bienert in the book *Kirchengeschichte in ökumenischer Verantwortung* (Church History of Ecumenical Responsibility):

*Darüber hinaus war Hermannsburg für die New angekommenen Missionare gleichfalls mehr als nur der Ort ihrer Ausbildungsstätte oder das Zentrum einer aussendenden Gesellschaft oder Organisation. Es war zugleich ihre "geistliche" Heimat, von der sie geprägt waren. Vor allem war es natürlich die Wirkungsstätte ihres "Vaters" Ludwig Harms, der sie ausgesandt hatte und dem sie sich auf eine besondere Weise verpflichtet fühlten. Dieser selbst aber verband sein Wirken auf innigste Weise eben mit dem Ort Hermannsburg, so daß die Namen Ludwig and Theodor Harms mit dem Ort Hermannsburg im Sinne eines Zentrums der Mission nahezu verschmolzen. Die Liebe zur Heimat und zum lutherischen Bekenntnis verband und konkretisierte sich für sie im Namen Hermannsburg. Hermannsbürger zu sein, das bedeutete deutsch und nicht zuletzt lutherisch sein.*¹³⁵

¹³⁴ D. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad. Cultural Policies and National Identity in Namibia*. 2002. p. 52.

¹³⁵ W. Bienert, *Kirchengeschichte in ökumenischer Verantwortung: Ausgewählte Studien*. 2009. p. 204.

...for the newly arriving missionaries, Hermannsburg was more than just the town in which they had received their training, or the headquarters of a sending society or organisation. It was also their “spiritual” *Heimat* in which they had been shaped. Above all it was the place of operation of their “father” Ludwig Harms, who had sent them out as “his children” and to whom they felt duty bound in a unique way. He (Harms) himself connected his work so intimately with the location of Hermannsburg that the names of Ludwig and Theodor Harms became virtually synonymous with the workings of the Mission. (Therefore, for the missionaries) the love of their *Heimat* and the Lutheran confession were brought together to be physically manifested in the name Hermannsburg. To be a Hermannsburger, therefore, meant to be German and not least, Lutheran. (Own translation)

Although it cannot be disputed that the Christian conviction of the HMS missionaries and colonists characterised the nature of their departure from Hermannsburg, it would be inaccurate to suggest that the circumstances of nineteenth century German immigration did not play an important part in precipitating its venture. Indeed, when attempting to understand the circumstances of the village of Hermannsburg during this period, it is interesting to note how little has been written about the general lives of its villagers that is not directly related to the HMS. In this sense, even though the significant volumes of published HMS history have served to place Hermannsburg in the spotlight as a religiously inspired community, very little attention has been paid to the broader social and economic circumstances of the Hermannsburg villagers themselves. It is an avenue for possible future research that would certainly prove to be of interest in determining both the economic and migratory patterns of the Hermannsburg community before the beginning of the HMS. It is a question that ultimately needs to be considered as a counter-point to the theme of religiosity that has tended to dominate the historical narrative of Hermannsburg immigration to South Africa over the latter part of the nineteenth century. Specifically, to what extent the enrolment of Hermannsburg villagers and those of the surrounding area in the HMS was driven by a fundamental desire to emigrate in search of new and better life circumstances.¹³⁶

One of the sources that lends support to this theory can be found in the Masters’ dissertation, *The Divided Roots of Lutheranism in South Africa* by Harald Winkler. He

¹³⁶ H. Winkler, *The Divided Roots of Lutheranism in South Africa*. (Masters Dissertation), 1989. pp. 23-24.

quotes the controversial and outspoken first HMS superintendent to South Africa, August Hardeland, as follows:

"Liebe Brüder, was hätte dieser Mensch doch für 'unveräußerliche Rechte' in Deutschland gehabt, die er hier nicht doppelt hätte? Hätte vielleicht immerdar Gesell bleiben müssen, oder wäre vielleicht ein kleiner Flickschneider auf einem Dörfchen geworden. Hätte in beiden Fällen es sich blutsauer ums tägliche Brot werden lassen, hätte sich bücken, sich so vieles geduldig gefallen lassen müssen, dazu von ungläubigen, rohen Leuten ... Aber nun ist er Missionar; nun hat er natürlich ganz andere 'unveräußerliche persönliche Rechte', darf nun kein 'mechanisch Werkzeug' sein, sondern muß unbeschränkte Freiheit für seinen Willen und seine Lüste haben, - warum hätte er sonst Missionar werden sollen?"

Dear brethren, what 'inalienable rights' could this person have had in Germany, which he (sic) did not have twofold here? Would have remained an apprentice forever, or perhaps a small tailor in a village. Would in both cases have struggled for his daily bread, would have had to bow, and endure so many things, especially from unbelieving, rough people ... But now he is a missionary; now he has very different 'inalienable personal rights', cannot be a 'mechanical tool', but must have unfettered freedom for his will and desires - why else should he have become a missionary¹³⁷ (Winkler's translation)

While the cynicism of Hardeland's comments must be seen in the context of the inter-personal and institutional conflict that marked his tenure as superintendent from 1859 to 1863, it cannot but underscore the fact that each of the HMS missionaries and colonists would have had their own, possibly ulterior motives for engaging in its venture. As such, the steady supply of both missionary candidates and willing colonists arguably pays as much testimony to the desire to seek a new life abroad as it does to the persuasiveness of Harms's preaching. It is certainly evident from Harms's rigorous selection process that he must have been aware of the allure that his newly formed missionary society would have had on many segments of the surrounding population. For some of these, especially those candidates with whom Harms was not personally familiar, a year-long internship was often arranged to be

¹³⁷ H. Winkler, *The Divided Roots of Lutheranism in South Africa*. (Masters Dissertation). 1989. pp. 23-24.

spent working under the supervision of one of the village's congregants in order to test the candidate's sincerity.¹³⁸ When seen within the context of the broader socio-economic circumstances of nineteenth century Hanover, such measures were undoubtedly prudent, especially when one considers the extraordinary extent of what was on offer by the HMS: Not only would a successful candidate be provided with a free higher education, board and lodging (albeit one that he would have to work for), but virtually all of the logistical and financial obstacles to emigration would similarly be taken care of. When considering that such aspects would have been all but out of reach for many of the lower and landless classes of Hermannsburg, the promise of a new life and status as a missionary would have been an extremely attractive proposition for many.

It is in taking these aspects into consideration that the dynamics of the nineteenth century HMS mission to southern Africa can be thought of as something of an amalgam between the socio-economic circumstances of Germany at the time and the religious fervour of Harms's ministry. As such, it can even be argued that the development of the HMS not only provided the logistical and financial support for emigration to occur, but also (and just as importantly) the ideological justification for those individuals who would otherwise have been dissuaded from departing due to familial and other social pressures. In this respect, the HMS played a crucial role in establishing the foundations of an intercontinental chain migration in which a significant portion of the village of Hermannsburg (and members of the surrounding population) was literally transplanted to the Natal colony, both in its name and in the makeup of its populace. It is a phenomenon that was mirrored in other examples of German migrations over the nineteenth century and which has been addressed by authors such as Walter Kamphoefner in the introduction to the book *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*, under the title "Not uprooting but reunion: The Significance of Chain Migration in the Immigration Experience".¹³⁹ When seen along these lines, the emigration of the HMS Germans can be regarded as a distinctly conservative movement that, thereby, directly contributed to the diasporic influences on its descendant population as a whole. It is with these aspects in mind that the next chapter investigates the life circumstances of August Behrens and as a case study of the Hermannsburg immigration to southern Africa.

¹³⁸ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 36.

¹³⁹ W. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*. 1987. p. 3.

Chapter 2 *Aufbruch nach Afrika - Departure to Africa* 1864-1895

The life of August Heinrich Dietrich Behrens that began in Hermannsburg, Germany on 8 March, 1864, was one that held an immediate affiliation to the HMS.¹ Baptised by Ludwig Harms, the young August would not only have learnt that his uncle, Wilhelm Behrens, had sailed to Africa as an HMS missionary in 1857,² but that his aunt, Lena, had also become a bride to one of the first HMS missionaries stationed there.³ They were events that, taken together, exemplified some of the changes that had taken place within the HMS in the first years after its missionaries' arrival in the Natal Colony. Here, it had been the persistent complaints of the initial missionaries regarding the circumstances of their enforced celibacy that had soon persuaded Harms to relent and allow the members of the group to marry. Even so, it was in a customary display of paternalism that Harms decided that he himself should choose suitable brides from Hermannsburg for each of the group, rather than allow them to attempt local marriages.⁴ It followed that despite the continued prohibition of engagements for the duration of missionary candidates' training, the HMS's concept of a monastic mission did not long survive the arrival of its first missionaries in Africa.

The story of Wilhelm Behrens that made an important impact on August Behrens's childhood also came to hold an important place in HMS lore. In particular, it was Wilhelm Behrens's decision to donate the Behrens's Hermannsburg farm to the HMS that has often been quoted as an example of the aspirant missionary's spiritual convictions.⁵ Yet, at the same time, they were actions that could also be understood from an alternative perspective. As the oldest son in a long line of farmers, the responsibility of running the family farm would have fallen upon Wilhelm by birth. A responsibility that given the economic circumstances of Hanover at the time, might have seemed an enviable position to any of those not born as an eldest son, let alone as one due to inherit one of the largest estates in the surrounding area. However, as for so many individuals born into a role governed by their family's expectations, the prospect of having his life path decided for him seemed to have

¹ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 9, 19.

² J. Brammer, *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt. Ein Lebensbild des Betschuanemissionars Wilhelm Behrens*. 1950. p. 14.

³ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 19; Behrens family tree - Personal Collection, Cape Town; H. Pape, *Hermannsburg Missionare in Südafrika*. 1986. p. 181.

⁴ A. Leuschke, "The Hermannsburg Mission Society in Natal and Zululand." *Lantern. The German Contribution to the Development of SA*. Feb. 1992. p. 58.

⁵ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburg Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 36, 53.

been especially stifling. Therefore, with the beginning of the HMS in 1849, the twenty-one-year-old Wilhelm was said to have set his heart upon the adventure of a missionary calling abroad - an aspiration that was met with the firm opposition of his father, and thus also an automatic refusal by Harms.⁶

It was after Wilhelm Behrens's first attempt to join the HMS had been refused, despite his father's passing soon thereafter, that he had married and tried to resign himself to a life in Hermannsburg. It was an attempt that turned out to be short-lived and in the year that the HMS first sailed to Africa, Wilhelm had repeated his petition to be allowed to enrol in the seminary. As before, Harms had at first turned away the young applicant, not least due to the fact that Wilhelm's position as a married man placed him at odds with what were then still the monastic principles of the mission's vision. It was at this point that Wilhelm Behrens appeared to make the offer that Harms could not refuse, namely, to donate the Behrens farm to the HMS in an act that finally seemed to persuade Harms to decide in Wilhelm's favour.⁷ It followed that Wilhelm Behrens (accompanied by his wife) entered the HMS seminary on 30 January 1854 as one of twelve successful candidates from over sixty applicants.⁸ In turn, it fell upon his widowed mother and those of his siblings still living on the *Behrenshof* to vacate the family home and move into a small dwelling on an adjacent plot that Wilhelm had negotiated as recompense for them. Here the agreement stipulated that his mother be provided a modest stipend of bread, milk, butter, eggs and firewood, along with the annual gift of a fattened pig for the remainder of her life.⁹ It was a drastic change for a family that had once been the most prominent farmers in the village and who were now reduced to a piece of land that would not be able to sustain them. Thus, it was in these circumstances that August Behrens was born to Wilhelm's younger brother, Heinrich, and his wife Marie in 1864.¹⁰

As a builder by trade, August's father, Heinrich, had previously been counted as one of the *Häuslinge* of Hermannsburg - those individuals still living under their older

⁶ J. Brammer, *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt. Ein Lebensbild des Betschuanemissionars Wilhelm Behrens*. 1950. pp. 7-9.

⁷ J. Brammer, *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt. Ein Lebensbild des Betschuanemissionars Wilhelm Behrens*. 1950. pp. 7-9.

⁸ J. Brammer, *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt. Ein Lebensbild des Betschuanemissionars Wilhelm Behrens*. 1950. p. 12.

⁹ A. Behrens, *Lebenserinnerungen von August Heinrich Dietrich Behrens*. (undated & unpublished). p. ii.

¹⁰ A. Behrens, *Lebenserinnerungen von August Heinrich Dietrich Behrens*. (undated & unpublished). pp. i-ii, 1.

siblings' roofs. However, while his brother's decision had meant that he had been afforded what remained of the Behrens family's inheritance, it also meant that he was now required to take on the role as the family's primary breadwinner. For a young builder, this meant needing to walk substantial distances in search of what work he could find in the surrounding villages. As for August, his childhood memories included attending the little Hermannsburg school before assisting his mother around the yard. It was on one such occasion that August had lost his footing climbing down from the house's loft, breaking both his wrists in the process. While the local, eighty-year-old doctor had splinted the arms, it soon became evident that the doctor's attempt had left August's wrists substantially misaligned. It followed that a few days later, August accompanied his father to the regional capital of Celle, where another doctor proceeded to re-break and set the wrists while his father fed him cherries to help anaesthetise the pain.¹¹ As it turned out, it was the last memory that August Behrens recorded of his father who died the following year of tuberculosis or *Schwindsucht* (consumption) as it was known in Germany at the time.

Then, when his grandmother died the following year the family was left penniless and reliant on the charity of others to survive the winter. From this point onwards, the members of the Behrens family who remained in Hermannsburg were essentially counted among the village poor and August together with his younger brother Fritz, routinely gathered firewood in the nearby state forest as was then still allowed for destitute families.¹²

Whilst the change that had befallen the Behrens family in Hermannsburg proved to be the central concern in August Behrens's life, there were other equally important changes that had also taken place over the course of this time. To begin with, it was in 1866, two years after August's birth, that the political circumstances of Hanover had been severely altered when the Hanoverian Kingdom was annexed by Prussia following a short war. When this was followed by yet another war in 1870, this time between a Prussian led German alliance and France, the way was paved for Germany's unification in 1871 as the new German *Reich*.¹³ Although the first of these changes had been witnessed by the then already ailing Ludwig Harms, the HMS's founder did not survive to see the second as he died soon afterwards at the end of

¹¹ A. Behrens, *Lebenserinnerungen von August Heinrich Dietrich Behrens*. (undated & unpublished). pp. 1-2.

¹² A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 10-11.; Behrens family tree - Personal Collection, Cape Town.

¹³ J. Coy, *A Brief History of Germany*. 2011. pp. 134, 138-139.

1866. Stepping in to take his brother's place, Theodor Harms assumed control over the HMS while remaining firmly opposed to the new Prussian dispensation.¹⁴ Thus, although the younger Harms was subsequently suspended due to the nature of this continued opposition, he still presided over August Behrens's confirmation in the Lutheran church in 1878. It followed that at the age of fourteen, August Behrens departed Hermannsburg to begin a gardening apprenticeship in the nearby town of Uezeln.¹⁵

By the time that August Behrens began his apprenticeship, it is notable that only one of his father's seven siblings still resided in the Hermannsburg village. While three had eventually joined the HMS, one as a missionary and two as missionary brides, two of his other uncles had found work in Hamburg while the youngest sibling eventually emigrated to America.¹⁶ Indeed, the only direct relation to have returned to Hermannsburg during this time was the son of his missionary uncle, Wilhelm Behrens junior, who, having grown up on his father's South African mission station, had decided to follow in his father's footsteps. Accordingly, he had been sent back to Germany to complete his training in the HMS seminary beginning in 1875.¹⁷ Therefore, it was towards the end of his cousin, Wilhelm's, time in Hermannsburg and approximately half way through his own apprenticeship in Uezeln, that August received the news that one of the other HMS missionaries in Africa, Friedrich Fuls, had sent word asking Wilhelm Behrens junior to recruit a young man to tend the farming operation that he had established there. The offer would include a yearly salary of fifteen pounds, board and lodging and as such the chance of a new and exciting beginning. It was an opportunity that August Behrens seemed to have leapt at.¹⁸ In comparison to the life that would have awaited him in Germany, that by then had begun its rapid industrialisation, a new life in Africa offered him something that Germany could not,¹⁹ namely the availability of land and a markedly improved social status. On top of this, the looming prospect of three years of compulsory military service that had been implemented following Hanover's incorporation into Prussia in

¹⁴ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 59.

¹⁵ A. Behrens, *Lebenserinnerungen von August Heinrich Dietrich Behrens*. (undated & unpublished). pp. 4-5.

¹⁶ A. Behrens, *Lebenserinnerungen von August Heinrich Dietrich Behrens*. (undated & unpublished). pp. i-ii.

¹⁷ H. Pape, *Hermannsburger Missionare in Südafrika*. 1986. p. 14.

¹⁸ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 14-15.

¹⁹ W. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri*. 1987. p. 34.

1866,²⁰ and the fact that he would almost certainly not have been able to afford the journey abroad without the assistance of his prospective employer, appear to have been more than sufficient grounds to motivate his ready acceptance of the opportunity.

The departure of August Behrens from Germany in 1880, that entailed the abandonment of his half-finished apprenticeship, was one that took full advantage of his family's close association to the HMS. Leaving Hermannsburg on 10 June, in the company of his cousin, along with 33 other HMS missionaries and emigrants, August Behrens was hardly striking out into the unknown. What is more, where the first HMS missionaries and colonists had all undertaken the journey south in the HMS's ship, *Candace*, the ageing bark had already been sold by 1874, both due to the state of its timbers as well as the convenience of reduced passenger fares on existing steam ship liners.²¹ It followed that the party of 1880 Hermannsburg emigrants joined what had by then become the established commercial migratory network of Germans departing from Hamburg to the international hub of the English port city of Southampton.²² However, while the majority of their fellow countrymen then embarked upon the trans-Atlantic voyage west to America, the Hermannsburgers instead boarded the steam ship *Arab*, that would take them south to Africa.²³ It was a voyage that had often taken the *Candace* up to three months to complete but which the new *Arab* took no more than 24 days to negotiate. Then, arriving in Cape Town, August and his fellow HMS passengers next boarded the decidedly less comfortable and apparently lice-infested coastal steamer *Rainbow*, that put in to Durban harbour less than a week later, thereby ending what amounted to almost a month at sea.²⁴

Stepping ashore in July 1880, August Behrens thus became one of the newest members in an already extended line of HMS immigrants who had undertaken the journey to the Natal Colony. Indeed, by the end of that decade the HMS would be able to count just shy of 60 missionaries in the southern African mission field who, when counted together with their wives and children, along with those of the substantial numbers of HMS colonists, already represented a sizeable community of

²⁰ S. Stehlin, *Bismarck and the Guelph Problem 1866-1890: A Study in Particularist Opposition to National Unity*. 1973. p. 163.

²¹ F. Grubb, *German Immigration and Servitude in America, 1709-1920*. 2011. pp. 379, 381-382.

²² T. Brinkmann, *Points of Passage: Jewish Migrants from Eastern Europe in Scandinavia, Germany and Britain 1880-1914*. 2013. p. 85.

²³ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 15.

²⁴ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 15.

interconnected family units.²⁵ It followed that from the outset of August Behrens's arrival in Natal, his journey inland was further facilitated by the established chain of HMS mission stations and settlements that would have required little if any need on his part to initiate contact with non-German speakers. Wasting little time, the group of over thirty new arrivals transferred their luggage from the ship to the adjacent harbour railway line before travelling to the top of Botha's Hill that was then still the end of the track.²⁶ Here, the travellers were awaited by a number of HMS ox-wagons who were to ferry them the remaining distance to New Hermannsburg. It was a journey that included a stop at the region's other German settlement of New Hanover for a Sunday Church service, before it was continued to New Hermannsburg where they were greeted by the HMS's mission's superintendent Karl Hohls.²⁷

When surveying the two decades that had passed between Missionary Wilhelm Behrens's arrival in Natal in 1858 and August Behrens's completion of the same journey in 1880, there were some important developments that had taken place in the HMS's mission field. Where the initial conception of the HMS had been to establish a communal Christian mission beyond the boundaries of European colonialism, the realities of the circumstances that were encountered in Africa had soon resulted in a number of important shifts.²⁸ Since Harms's permission for the HMS missionaries to marry, the arrival of brides from Hermannsburg had become a common occurrence for the New Hermannsburg settlement. While the first of these women had all been chosen and assigned by Harms himself, it soon became customary for the newly qualified missionaries to find prospective brides themselves before their departure for Africa.²⁹ However, even if a willing partner had been found, the new "bride" was typically required to wait until her prospective husband had established himself at his destination, before she would be allowed to be sent out.³⁰ Compounding this procedure was the fact that Harms's communal model of

²⁵ D. Lindemann, *In This Sign You Shall Conquer. The Story of Ludwig Harms, the Hermannsburg Mission Society and Their contribution to the Missouri Synod*. WELS Historical Institute. 14 October 2001. p. 9.

²⁶ M. Cottrell, "The first public railway in South Africa: The Point to Durban railway of 1860". *Natalia* 40 (2010). p. 20.

²⁷ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 16-17.

²⁸ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsburg Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1890-1939*. 1988. pp. 40-41.

²⁹ A. Leuschke, "The Hermannsburg Mission Society in Natal and Zululand." *Lantern*. The German Contribution to the Development of SA. Feb. 1992. p. 58.

³⁰ H. Harms, *Concern for the Unreached. Life and work of Louis Harms, founder of the Hermannsburg Mission*. 1999. p.56; E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 52-53.

interdependent missionaries and colonists soon proved to be far less practical than initially imagined.³¹ Not only were the distances between inhabited (Zulu) settlements frequently quite extensive, but many of these communities were typically clustered into further decentralised family units. It followed that the HMS missionaries themselves soon began to disperse in order to practice a more effective means of reaching a wider audience. As a result, it became the norm for individual missionaries not only to have to establish their own mission stations but to take charge of generating their own income and general subsistence as well.³²

One of the other important changes that had arisen in the first years following the HMS's arrival in the Natal Colony had been an unexpected invitation for its missionaries to begin work in the newly formed Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek (ZAR) (1852) or Transvaal as it was later known, that lay beyond Zululand to the north. Offered by the then ZAR president, Martinus Pretorius, the invitation specifically requested missionaries to work among the BaKwena people of Bechuanaland.³³ While a number of the HMS missionaries felt compelled to respond to the request, in spite of the considerable distances involved, the venture soon fell afoul of political tensions between the BaKwena and the ZAR's Boers or 'farmers'.³⁴ When these were further exacerbated by a dispute within the HMS itself, it would not be until 1863 that the Bechuanaland mission regained some of its initial momentum.³⁵ It had been into this new field that Missionary Wilhelm Behrens and his family were sent in 1864 after completing a hard and relatively unsuccessful time at the HMS Zululand mission stations of *Ehlanzeni* and *Emhlangane*.³⁶ Therefore, after undertaking the arduous journey of approximately five hundred kilometres to the north, the family had established a mission station half way between the towns of Pretoria and Rustenburg at a location they named *Bethanie*.³⁷ It was here, in the western district

³¹ R. Ganter, *German Missionaries in Australia*. Griffith University. Url: <<http://missionaries.griffith.edu.au/missionary-training/hermannsburg-mission-society-1849#Theodor%20Harms%20and%20the%20Kulturkampf>> Access: 2016-09-29.

³² E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. p. 57.

³³ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 237-239.

³⁴ W. Proske, "The Political Significance of the Early Hermannsburg Mission to Botswana: An Assessment of its Role Among the Batswana, the British and the Boers." *Botswana Notes and Records*. Volume 22. 1990. pp. 44-46.

³⁵ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission*. Hermannsburg, 2000. pp. 240-242.

³⁶ H. Pape, *Hermannsburger Missionare in Südafrika*. 1986. p. 15.

³⁷ J. Brammer, *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt. Ein Lebensbild des Betschuanemissionars Wilhelm Behrens*. 1950. pp. 21-22.

of the Transvaal that August and his cousin, Wilhelm junior were destined to travel to and where August's new employer, the Missionary Friedrich Fuls, awaited his arrival on his own mission station of *Leporro*, a further eighty kilometres to the west.³⁸

As preparations were being made for the HMS wagon convoy that August and his cousin were due to accompany on their journey north, August spent the next three months being put up by a series of family friends and relations that for the most part he had never met. This included his aunt Lena Schütze (nee Behrens) as well as a cousin of his father, Dorothea Bergmann (nee Behrens) who like his aunt, had journeyed to Natal as a bride to one of the HMS colonists.³⁹ It is a period in which August not only mentions the pang of *Heimweh* or homesickness, but also the fact that the New Hermannsburg wedding customs were "so very different to those in (Hermannsburg) Germany"⁴⁰ - a change that can be attributed to the need for both practicality and the absence of a close-knit village community. Other customs, however, appeared to have been more robust, including the use of the low German dialect of *Plattdeutsch* as the primary mode of communication within its general community.⁴¹ Yet, even here, the similarities to the region's low Dutch, or "embryonic Afrikaans-Dutch" as one author put it, had served to create some alarm among the HMS leadership, given that the interplay between these languages (not to mention the additional use of English and *isiZulu*) appeared to be on the verge of creating a "*grässliches Kauderwälsch*" (horrible gibberish).⁴² It followed that the use of High German thus gradually began to replace *Plattdeutsch* as a more distinctive German alternative.⁴³

While other significant regional developments are not mentioned in August Behrens's memoirs, it is notable that his arrival in Natal had taken place almost exactly one year after the dramatic conclusion of the Anglo-Zulu War, and with it the effective destruction of Zulu autonomy. It was an event that had had its own specific ramifications for the HMS who had long since become frustrated with the widespread disinterest that it had experienced from the Zulu population - this to the extent that

³⁸ J. Bergh (ed.), *Geskiedenisatlas van Suid-Afrika. Die Vier Noordelike Provinsies*. 1999. p. 57.

³⁹ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 17-23.; K. Behrens, *Stammbaum der Familie Behrens* (family tree - Personal Collection), Cape Town. 1936.

⁴⁰ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 23.

⁴¹ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 18, 28.

⁴² G. Meyer, *Die Pflege der Deutschen Sprache im Westlichen Transvaal*. (Masters Dissertation) 1956. p. 11.

⁴³ G. Meyer, *Die Pflege der Deutschen Sprache im Westlichen Transvaal*. (Masters Dissertation) 1956. p. 10.

the HMS was able to count no more than thirty baptisms after almost two decades of work in the Zulu Kingdom.⁴⁴ As a result, it did not take long before the HMS missionaries in Natal had all but abandoned Harms's original precept of counter-colonialism in favour of European overlordship that they believed could amount to a form of "göttliche Zulassung" (divine access).⁴⁵ It would have been with some of these developments in mind that August and Wilhelm Behrens (jnr.) embarked upon their journey inland that, with the onset of the summer rains, soon became an exercise in frustration as swollen rivers and muddy tracks slowed their wagons to a crawl.⁴⁶ Then, with their arrival in the Transvaal capital almost two months later, August Behrens was afforded the experience of another regional upheaval when he witnessed the beginning of the Boer revolt in 1880 against the British annexation that had taken place a few years before.⁴⁷ It was under the circumstances of these rising tensions and after taking the Sunday to rest and observe the Christian sabbath, that the HMS wagons and their travellers departed Pretoria that Monday, heading west along the Magaliesberg mountain range, where two days later, they finally arrived at the HMS mission station of *Bethanie*.⁴⁸

With his journey of approximately six months completed, August Behrens described the joyful union with the members of his family who, as with his other African relations, he had never met. These, having already spent sixteen years at *Bethanie* among the Bakwena ba Mogopa, were well established on what had become a flourishing mission station complete with a well-attended church and school, the latter of which counting three hundred pupils by 1880.⁴⁹ They were results that stood in marked contrast to the frustrations of the HMS's Zululand mission, but not without good reason. Since the arrival of the Boers in the Transvaal, the settler's hunger for both land and cheap available labour had given rise to increasingly stringent labour policies in which the ZAR's Black African population were considered subjects rather than citizens. Among these was the so-called "Kaffir Law" of 1866 that made specific provisions for labour, taxation and a pass system with which to restrict the freedom

⁴⁴ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsburg Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1890-1939*. 1988. pp. 39-40.

⁴⁵ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsburg Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1890-1939*. 1988. pp. 34-35.

⁴⁶ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 24-25.

⁴⁷ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. p. 60.

⁴⁸ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 28.

⁴⁹ J. Brammer, *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt. Ein Lebensbild des Betschuanemissionars Wilhelm Behrens*. 1950. p. 24; H. Bamman, *Inkulturation des Evangeliums unter den Batswana in Transvaal / Südafrika*. (PhD thesis), UNISA. Pretoria. 2002. p. 161.

of movement of Black Africans in the ZAR.⁵⁰ However, by far the most onerous of these restrictions was the ZAR Volksraad decision in 1855 to disallow the ownership of land by Black Africans in its territory.⁵¹ Accordingly, Black populations such as the Bakwena ba Mogopa faced a variety of measures that sought to coerce its populous into regular labour practices, usually in return for their right to reside upon the recently expropriated land. It had been in the face of such harassment that many Black communities had taken it upon themselves to move out of the ZAR's jurisdiction, or at the very least, seek out more favourable tenures from moderate land owners.⁵²

It was in view of these circumstances that the HMS missionaries in the Transvaal came to represent an important resource for the otherwise disenfranchised Black population - specifically due to their ability to purchase and hold land in trust for their congregations. As one among these, Missionary Wilhelm Behrens had facilitated the purchase of land for the Bakwena ba Mogopa, enabling them to rid themselves of some of the more burdensome obligations that had been placed upon them by the surrounding White land owners. In turn, missionaries such as Behrens bemoaned the fact that the ZAR's Black population was thoroughly "yoked and made servile" (*unterjocht und geknechtet*) with "no rights other than to receive a series of beatings" (*kein Recht, als eine Tracht Schläge*)⁵³. Yet, even while many HMS missionaries were similarly vocal in their disapproval of the ZAR's treatment of the Black African population, others remained sceptical as to the potential success of the HMS mission, were it not for the maintenance of white authority in the region.⁵⁴ It was within the context of this debate that August Behrens thus arrived at his new employer, Missionary Fuls, at the beginning of 1881, who, although counted as one among the more vocal opponents of the ZAR's labour practices, eventually proved himself no stranger to scandal and oppression either.

⁵⁰ J. Bergh & F. Morton, "To make them serve..." *The 1871 Transvaal Commission on African Labour*. 2003. p. 11.

⁵¹ J. Bergh & F. Morton, "To make them serve..." *The 1871 Transvaal Commission on African Labour*. 2003. p. 11.

⁵² J. Bergh, White Farmers and African Labourers in Pre-Industrial Transvaal. *Historia*. Vol. 55, no. 1. 2010. p. 3.

⁵³ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsbürger Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1880-1939*. Göttingen. 1988. pp. 45-46.

⁵⁴ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsbürger Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1880-1939*. Göttingen. 1988. p. 46.

The farm and HMS mission station of *Leporro*, that was overseen by Missionary Friedrich Fuls, represents an important, even if somewhat unusual example of the circumstances that were faced by the HMS missionaries in the ZAR. To begin with, Missionary Fuls had not stemmed from Hermannsburg or even from the *Lüneburger Heide*, but rather from the small, but notable town of Ludwigslust in the neighbouring north German province of Mecklenburg.⁵⁵ Having been born into a wealthy family and no doubt well educated, Fuls had arrived in the ZAR with the unusual ability to be able to effect the private purchase of his own land. Therefore, it was on this personal property that he not only operated his mission station of *Leporro*, but had quickly begun to conduct a fully fledged commercial farming operation as well. In contrast, other HMS missionaries were typically reliant on the HMS to buy the land upon which they intended to settle, even if they as with Missionary Fuls, were thereupon required to be fully self-sufficient. However, as soon became evident, the need for personal financial security meant that many missionaries inevitably neglected their mission stations in order to devote more time to the pursuit of various commercial activities.⁵⁶ While this had led to the HMS's attempt to abolish all forms of commercial trade by the early 1870's through the introduction of a small annual salary, the financial difficulties of the HMS soon proved this to be an unsustainable solution, forcing the missionaries to return to a significant degree of self-reliance. It was in the context of these changes that Fuls had chosen to enlist August Behrens as a manager for his operation and so doing, at least appear to offer the due diligence that his calling within the HMS required.⁵⁷ As it was, August Behrens's relationship with Missionary Fuls appears to have been strained from the start, not least due to the fact that the missionary appeared to be a hard and impatient task master. This to the effect that Fuls himself enforced a system of mandatory labour upon those of his congregants who chose to stay and receive instruction on the *Leporro* property.⁵⁸

In spite of some obvious tensions, August Behrens eventually completed three years of work for Missionary Fuls during which time the young employee habitually sent back well over half the fifteen pounds of his annual wage to his mother in Germany.

⁵⁵ H. Pape, *Hermannsburg Missionare in Südafrika*. 1986. p. 59.

⁵⁶ H. Behrens & H. Wehrmann (ed), *Wehrmannstreffen. 150. Geburtstag des Missionars Ernst Friedrich Wehrmann, Wehrmannsruh. 22 & 23 Oktober 1983*. 1983. p. 3; J. Brammer, *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt. Ein Lebensbild des Betschuanemissionars Wilhelm Behrens*. 1950. pp. 17-18.

⁵⁷ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsburg Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1880-1939*. Göttingen. 1988. pp. 61-64.

⁵⁸ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 29-30.

It was a transaction made possible by the HMS network that not only reaffirms the centrality of its role as a facilitator of German immigration, but just as importantly, the continuation of ties between expatriates and their families in Germany. In this particular instance, the ability of August Behrens to be able to deposit a sum of ten pounds into the *Missionskasse* (mission's coffers) in the Transvaal that could, thereupon, simply be withdrawn by his mother from the HMS in Hermannsburg, Germany, undoubtedly presented an enormous advantage to an immigrant such as Behrens.⁵⁹ Then, it was at the beginning of 1884 that August was able to make use of yet another benefit of his close connection to the HMS network when he began to suffer the effects of a persistent lung infection. Ascribing his symptoms to an *Erbfehler* or inherited weakness from his late father, his condition gradually worsened so that by March, his uncle, Wilhelm Behrens, had come to collect him to take him back to the *Bethanie* mission station. Here, August spent the next six months convalescing in the care of his relations who, through the use of rest and various home remedies, managed to nurse the young man back onto his feet. It was a cure that was completed when August accompanied an ox-wagon transport of tobacco (on behalf of his uncle) to Queenstown in the eastern Cape Colony. A journey that lasted three months and covered approximately two thousand kilometres whereupon the young man was able to return to *Bethanie* in November of 1884 with his health fully restored.⁶⁰

Yet, if August had relished the renewal of his vitality, then the question of what to do next was one that no longer seemed to have an obvious answer.⁶¹ This was especially due to the fortunes of his former employer, the Missionary Friedrich Fuls, having taken a rather drastic turn for the worse after the missionary became embroiled in a legal battle brought against him by a Tswana complainant (represented by the local farmer and native commissioner, Hercules Malan) over a disputed sale of a number of cattle. Remarkably, and in one of very few such instances in the ZAR, the court had ruled against the White defendant and awarded the case, with costs, to the Black plaintiff, leading the HMS directors to summarily suspend Fuls. It was an incident that despite Fuls' reputation as a hard taskmaster and no doubt too, a shrewd businessman, nevertheless seems to have been the result of a far more nefarious confrontation between himself and the local Boer authorities. In particular, Fuls' outspoken criticism of the corporal punishment meted

⁵⁹ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 31-32.

⁶⁰ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 33-35.

⁶¹ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 33-35.

out by the region's White farmers upon the surrounding Black community had created something of an uproar when one of his letters to the HMS in Germany had been published, accusing a nearby farmer of heinous acts of brutality against one of his (Fuls') congregants.⁶² Unfortunately for Fuls, the farmer in question was the newly elected President of the South African Republic, Paul Kruger, and the ensuing confrontation seems to have fostered a lingering sense of animosity between the parties. It follows that the government's eagerness to pursue a case against Fuls along with the HMS's heavy handed response to the matter appear to have been spurred on by a far more complex set of circumstances than would otherwise have been the case.⁶³ This was especially since the high profile of Fuls' accusations could easily have posed a significant risk to the future of the HMS's work in the ZAR. Even so, regardless of the probable motives, Fuls' eventual dismissal by the HMS along with the organisation's blanket apology to the state president, appear to have signalled the beginning of the end of the HMS's more vocal criticisms of the ZAR's racial policies.⁶⁴

With the loss of the opportunity to be able to return to work for Missionary Fuls on *Leporro* (despite the fact that he may well not have been inclined to do so), August Behrens was asked by his uncle whether he would instead begin a farming operation on the property of *Waaikraal*, situated some seven kilometers to the west of *Bethanie*. It was a piece of land that had been purchased in trust by Missionary Behrens for members of the Bakwena ba Mogopa clan, but which had become a joint venture after the community had not found sufficient means with which to effect the purchase on their own.⁶⁵ Accordingly, Missionary Behrens had remained entitled to the use of a portion of the farm which he believed would be able to provide him with a further source of disposable income. The offer, that entailed his nephew having to put the land to work in exchange for being allowed to farm his own section of approximately 6 morgen (5 hectares) was certainly not a very lucrative opportunity, but was nevertheless enough to provide the younger Behrens with a chance to earn a small living for himself. So, with the terms agreed upon, August

⁶² F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsbürger Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1880-1939*. Göttingen. 1988. pp. 65-67.

⁶³ Hasselhorn suggests that the Paul Kruger's administration may well have feared that the nature of Fuls' accusations could give Great Britain sufficient grounds to re-annex the ZAR.

⁶⁴ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsbürger Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1880-1939*. 1988. p. 68.

⁶⁵ J. Bergh (ed.), *Die Geskiedenisatlas van Suid-Africa. Die Vier Noordelike Provinsies*. Pretoria. 1999. p. 217.

took up residence in the existing shelter of the *Waaikraal* wagon house at the beginning of 1885 and began to till and dung the surrounding fields.⁶⁶

Although August Behrens's first year on *Waaikraal* must have been a somewhat lonely and undoubtedly frugal affair it would not have been without frequent visits to his relations at the *Bethanie* mission station. On the whole, the farm had fertile soil and a more than adequate source of water, yet the crops of wheat, onions and potatoes that he was able to grow struggled to generate any significant returns for the young farmer due to the persistence of deflated market prices.⁶⁷ To make matters even worse, by April of the following year (1886) he received the news that his nineteen-year-old brother, Fritz, had died of tuberculosis in Germany. Therefore, with only his mother and sixteen-year-old brother, Georg, then remaining of his immediate family, and with the certainty of what would amount to their increasingly destitute existence, August wrote to them suggesting that they should join him in fashioning a new life in Africa. With little to persuade her otherwise, his mother agreed and after August had sent through the necessary approval for the sale of the family's small Hermansburg property (a legal requirement given his position as the eldest male in the family), his mother and brother were able to use the resultant funds to pay for their fares to Africa. As before, the immigration occurred in the company of members of the HMS. In this instance, it was the visiting HMS Missionary Thomas Jensen of *Linokana* who was able to escort August's mother and brother all the way up to the *Linokana* mission station, just under two hundred kilometres to the west of *Bethanie*.⁶⁸

The emotions surrounding the arrival of August Behrens's fifty-one-year-old mother, Marie and his youngest brother, Georg, are not hard to imagine even if Behrens makes no specific reference to the day of the reunion in his writings. What he does mention, however, are that his mother found the adjustment to her new surroundings very difficult and often suffered the pangs of homesickness or *Heimweh*. Indeed, life had dealt Marie Behrens some hard blows given that in the ten years or so before, she had not only had to suffer the death of her husband, but two of her five⁶⁹ children as well. Yet, August notes that she did her utmost to adjust to her new and largely isolated circumstances that would have been markedly different to the communal

⁶⁶ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 37.

⁶⁷ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 39.

⁶⁸ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 38.

⁶⁹ The eldest son, Heinrich died in infancy (20-05-1869).

village life that she had always known in Germany. Spending the first year of her arrival living together in the converted wagon shed on a farm that still boasted crocodiles in the river and what August Behrens recalls as a plentiful variety of snakes, her new home would hardly have felt very welcoming. On Sundays, August would take his mother and brother to *Bethanie* for the weekly church service that was held exclusively in Setswana, a language with which Marie Behrens struggled to come to grips, yet a day that she invariably enjoyed by being in the familiar company of her extended family. During the remainder of the week, the two brothers worked together on the farm that included their refurbishment and extension of an abandoned and half-finished building that was to become their home. Here, Georg Behrens's skill as a trained carpenter came in very useful as he fashioned the lumber that August had felled into the beams and frames that were needed to complete the house's structure, thereby allowing the family trio to move into their new dwelling by April of 1888.⁷⁰

It was with the arrival of Marie and Georg Behrens in Africa by 1887 that the chain immigration of the Hermannsburg Behrens family had effectively been completed. Beginning in 1856 with the arrival of August Behrens's aunt Lena and followed by various other family members that included the Missionary Wilhelm Behrens, the thirty years between 1857 and 1887 witnessed the family's relocation to Africa within the period of a single generation. While some relations of the Behrens family would continue to live in Hermannsburg (Germany) and its surrounding areas for generations to come, the total of at least nine related individuals (men, women and children), who all emigrated from Germany bearing the Behrens name quickly translated into an extended family framework upon the African subcontinent. For an individual such as August Behrens, the existence of this familial network together with the larger framework of the HMS's community of missionaries and immigrants played a crucial role in his ability to establish himself in a foreign land. Even then, while the arrival of German (Hermannsburg) immigrants had certainly been facilitated by the HMS, their welfare in the often isolated interior was, nevertheless, largely left to whatever means they themselves had at their disposal - this especially for those individuals who for whatever reason, were no longer directly in the service of the HMS and for whom life in rural Africa was often marked by the reality of its potential pitfalls.

⁷⁰ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 37-39.

The German Settlements

Where HMS missionaries such as Wilhelm Behrens and Friedrich Fuls had been able to reap substantial benefits from the operation of their farms and mission stations, such circumstances were certainly not always the case for many of their colleagues. Nowhere was this more evident than for those HMS missionaries who came to be stationed in the outskirts of its Batswana mission field, such as those placed along the boundaries of the ZAR in Bechuanaland. Here, the remote nature of their postings along with other environmental challenges such as drought and malaria took a heavy toll among its members.⁷¹ They were circumstances that were well exemplified in the lives of two such HMS missionaries, Johann Tönsing and Ernst Wehrmann, who having arrived in Natal in 1862 and 1866 respectively, each suffered a series of calamities. For Tönsing this had meant the death of two successive spouses, both of whom had been the widowed wives of another HMS missionary before.⁷² In turn, Ernst Wehrmann's time in Bechuanaland had begun with his being forced to relocate at least nine times in as many years, often at the expense of a harvest, before he too lost his wife to illness in 1878. While both men had been able to remarry other women with connections to the HMS, it was in 1882 that Tönsing himself succumbed to the ravages of malaria at his mission station of *Manuane*.⁷³ It followed that, as in the case of other widowed HMS wives before her, Marie Tönsing was required to vacate the mission station to make room for Missionary Wehrmann to whom the station had then been assigned. It was a terrible lot for a woman who not only had ten children in her care, but who would henceforth no longer be eligible for any substantial assistance from the organisation to which she and both of her husbands had devoted most of their lives. Therefore, with no option but to comply, the grieving Tönsing family loaded their possessions onto an ox-wagon sometime towards the beginning of 1883 and departed *Manuane* to begin fending for themselves.⁷⁴

⁷¹ H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. pp. 14-15; F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsburg Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1890-1939*. 1988. p. 84; H. Pape, *Hermannsburg Missionare in Südafrika*. 1986. p. 175.

⁷² H. Pape, *Hermannsburg Missionare in Südafrika*. 1986. pp. 193, 203.

⁷³ H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. pp. 13-14.

⁷⁴ H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. pp. 14-15.

Yet, the story of Marie Tönsing does not end here. As with the other HMS missionaries of the day, Missionary Tönsing had been fully cognisant of the financial realities that his posting to Africa had entailed, and in particular, the very real prospect of having to retire without a pension or even the most meager support from the HMS. In response, and in order to counter the significant vulnerability of his growing family, Missionary Tönsing had purchased a farm in the Marico District of the ZAR in 1875. It was this undeveloped property of *Hermannskraal* that, therefore, became the refuge for his widow and family who, after approximately two days of travel from *Manuane*, had arrived on the farm where they drew their wagon into the shade of a large tree. It was on this spot that the widow Tönsing and her children proceeded to erect a rudimentary shelter that would gradually become the foundation of their new home. At approximately four thousand hectares the farm was big but more importantly it was situated in relative proximity to four other HMS mission stations whose missionaries were then able to assist the destitute Tönsing family to varying degrees. What followed was that the centrality and plight of the *Hermannskraal* Tönsings attracted frequent visitors from the surrounding German families and in time its location became the venue of a weekly German church service. As this gathering grew, some of these individuals joined the Tönsings in building their own homes on the farm where over the space of the next decade a small but active German community was established.⁷⁵

The events that led to the creation of a German settlement at *Hermannskraal* were undoubtedly due to the particular circumstances of the Tönsing family and yet, its establishment was by no means a unique occurrence within the HMS's southern African mission field. Indeed, over the course of that same decade, numerous other German settlements had similarly begun to emerge in both the Natal Colony and the ZAR in what can, therefore, also be regarded as an important transitional period for the German population throughout the region. It was a change that was almost universally fuelled by the first generation of the HMS missionaries' descendants who were beginning to reach adulthood by the 1880s and who were often not inclined to enter into the service of the HMS.⁷⁶ This was perhaps not surprising given that the circumstances of life in colonial Africa had presented the new generation with a notable difference to those that their forebears had experienced in Germany, and which had thereby helped to precipitate the first generation's enrolment into the

⁷⁵ H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. pp. 14-15.

⁷⁶ R. Otto, "Honderd Jaar Kroondal". *Lantern*. Special Edition: The German Contribution to the Development of SA, Feb. 1992. p. 131.

HMS. In particular, the access to readily available farm land and other forms of associated trade meant that the pursuit of an independent commercial existence would probably have been far more appealing than the restrictiveness of life as an HMS missionary. While this did not prevent the notable exceptions of various individuals who chose to follow in their father's footsteps, it seems that the majority of these came from families who had managed to establish themselves in relatively favourable locations. Among these, families such as those of Missionary Wilhelm Behrens of *Bethanie*, Thomas Jensen of *Dinokana* and Christoph Penzhorn of Saron, all managed to foster an intergenerational continuity of father and son missionaries who were each allowed to continue as the incumbents on their families' HMS mission stations.⁷⁷ This certainly leads one to speculate that the decision by each of these sons to enrol into the HMS would likely also (at least in part) have been influenced by the significant investment that their families had made into their respective mission stations: Investments that would otherwise have been lost if the family would be made to seek a new livelihood away from what, in such instances, had become a reasonably stable and profitable lifestyle.⁷⁸

For those missionaries in less established circumstances and for those whose descendants were not inclined to follow into a missionary calling, the encroachment of their age along with the needs of their children led many to invest in the purchase of private farms.⁷⁹ As in the case of *Hermannskraal*, these were often bought in close proximity to one another that thereby also allowed for a degree of mutual support and most importantly, the continuity of their communal and confessional existence that was centred upon a weekly Lutheran church service. By the mid-1880s, the natural development of this process in the Natal Colony had already given rise to farming communities such as Wartburg, Lüneburg, Bergen and Harburg that all represented the expanding second generation of German (HMS) immigrants.⁸⁰ As for those HMS families who were stationed in the ZAR, the initial delay in deploying

⁷⁷ H. Bamman, *Inkulturation des Evangeliums unter den Batswana in Transvaal / Südafrika - Am Beispiel der Arbeit von Vätern und Söhnen der Hermannsbürger Mission von 1857-1940*. (Doctoral Thesis), UNISA. Pretoria. 2002. p. 36.

⁷⁸ H. Bamman, *Inkulturation des Evangeliums unter den Batswana in Transvaal / Südafrika - Am Beispiel der Arbeit von Vätern und Söhnen der Hermannsbürger Mission von 1857-1940*. (Doctoral Thesis), UNISA. Pretoria. 2002. p. 208; F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsbürger Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1880-1939*. 1988. pp. 53-56, 58-60. 64-65.

⁷⁹ T. Wenhold. *Die Geschichte Kroondals (Auszug aus "Afrikanischer Heimatkalender 1970")*. 1970. pp. 85-87.; H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. pp. 14-15.

⁸⁰ H. Grünwald, *Die Geschichte der Deutschen in Südafrika*. 1992. p. 69.

substantial numbers of HMS missionaries into the region along with the limited numbers of HMS colonists accompanying them, meant that its German population had not yet reached the same concentrations as those in the Natal Colony.⁸¹ Despite the differences in these circumstances the overall trend was, nevertheless, equally relevant to the establishment of German settlements in the ZAR that besides the community of *Hermannskraal*, also boasted another small community at the HMS mission station of *Berseba*, and what would eventually become its archetypal example in the German settlement of Kroondal.⁸²

As with so many aspects of the German community in the western Transvaal, the origins of the settlement of Kroondal were born out of a set of circumstances that had been precipitated by the HMS. Situated eight kilometres to the west of Rustenburg along the region's Magaliesberg mountain range, the property, that was originally named *Kronendal*, had initially come into the possession of an HMS missionary (Zimmermann) who had intended to resettle his congregants there.⁸³ However, when his and a subsequent similar attempt failed, the next HMS Missionary, Christian Müller, recruited six others to share in the purchase of the property in 1889, with the express desire to establish a German settlement on the farm.⁸⁴ Of these new owners four, Christoph Penzhorn, Hermann Wenhold, Hans Peter Jordt and Heinrich Backeberg were also HMS missionaries, while two others, Georg Ottermann and Wilhelm Lange were German immigrants. Seen together, the land that had been bought measured just over three thousand hectares with access to a section of the Hex river, as well as water from the moderate flow of the Modderspruit stream.⁸⁵ As for the new owners, the decision to buy and share the rights to a single farm was undoubtedly an unusual undertaking given that most southern African commercial farming had long since adopted a far more extensive model of operation. This had certainly also been evident among those other German communities (such as those in Natal) whose settlements generally represented an extensive cluster of individual farms that were merely orientated towards a centrally

⁸¹ *Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinde Braunschweig (1869-1978). Kirchweihjubiläum der Christus-Kirche.* 1978. pp. 2,4.

⁸² H. Pape, "Hermannsbürger Missionsarbeit in Transvaal". *Lantern*. Special Edition: The German Contribution to the Development of SA, Feb. 1992. p. 62.

⁸³ H. Behrens & I. Behrens, *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989.* 1989. pp. 6-7.

⁸⁴ H. Behrens & I. Behrens, *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989.* 1989. pp. 6,8, 14.

⁸⁵ H. Behrens & I. Behrens, *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989.* 1989. pp. 12-14, 37-38.

situated church or HMS mission station. Yet, when placed under closer scrutiny, the unusual aspects of the Kroondal model must have held a number of advantages for its founders. To begin with, although the farm had been bought by the HMS missionaries, these had done so primarily in order to establish a livelihood for their descendants.⁸⁶ Given the nature of the missionaries' financial constraints the likelihood that any of their descendants would have been able to equip and run an entirely new farming operation was very low. This was certainly not an unusual situation for many of the ZAR's White farmers at the time who, lacking sufficient capital, often entered into sharecropping agreements with the Black tenants on their farms.⁸⁷ While this option would certainly have been available for the HMS missionaries to pursue, it seems not to have been an agreeable solution to the group. Instead, the missionaries seemed to have relied upon a strategy in which the collective division of a single property would allow their descendants to rely upon one another for mutual assistance in the establishment of their farming operations. As such, ploughs, wagons as well as their own labour and expertise could all be shared to allow for a relatively intensive cultivation of the fields despite a limited degree of initial financial investment. Crucially, this strategy had the further benefit of creating a closely-knit German community who, apart from being able to support each other in the logistical challenges of farming, would also be able to foster the continuity of their German cultural and confessional heritage that had been so important to their parents.⁸⁸

It was in the pursuit of this vision of a collaborative, culturally German farming village that the Kroondal investors appear to have drawn upon the old and no doubt familiar model of North Western German agriculture that they would have known in their youth (before the advent of Hanover's *Gemeinheitsteilung* and *Verkoppelung* that translates to the "division of common lands" and "consolidation" of holdings) of peasant agriculture that was discussed in Chapter 2).⁸⁹ According to this model the division of village farm land was typically arranged in a series of long and narrow strips in which a single farmer's holdings were often spread across numerous fields.

⁸⁶ H. Behrens & I. Behrens, *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989*. 1989. p. 14.

⁸⁷ J. S. Bergh. "White farmers and African labourers in the pre-industrial Transvaal". *Historia*, 55, 1. 2010. p. 23.

⁸⁸ A. Leuschke, "The Hermannsburg Mission Society in Natal and Zululand." *Lantern*. The German Contribution to the Development of SA. Feb. 1992. p. 58; T. Wenhold. *Die Geschichte Kroondals (Auszug aus "Afrikanischer Heimatkalender 1970")*. 1970. pp. 85-88.

⁸⁹ R. Frizzell, *Independent Immigrants: A Settlement of Hanoverian Germans in Western Missouri*. 2007. pp. 14, 16.

It was a farming patchwork that usually left the village and its common as the nucleus for its inhabitants in which the farmers, their families and the associated tradesmen all lived next to one another rather than being dispersed among individual and isolated homesteads (as had become the norm within the context of White farms in Africa). In what seems to be a direct reference to this traditional system, the founders of Kroondal made a clear distinction between the bulk of its agricultural land and that which would be designated for the creation of the Kroondal village or *Ortschaft*. This it was decided, should be situated in the western most corner of the property that lay close to the banks of the Hex River and the farm's western boundary. Here, running along the main road that dissected the farm, each family were next given one in an adjacent series of narrow plots (*Gehöfte*) upon which to build their home and tend to those crops, vegetables and livestock that could be used to supplement their immediate household needs. On the other side of the road and leading towards the western boundary, another division of similarly short and narrow fields made use of the plentiful Hex River water. As for the remaining bulk of its farmland that extended away to the north and east, a series of far bigger though proportionally similarly narrow lands were laid out as an enormous fan arcing away from the settlement. In this way each family's *Hof* (yard/plot), that was measured to be approximately 10 morgen in size, was typically disconnected from the bulk of the farmland that, thereby, also created the communal atmosphere of the settlement.⁹⁰

It is in surveying the character of Kroondal as it began to emerge in the last years before the end of the nineteenth century that we begin to get a sense of the collective identity that would shape its inhabitants for generations to come. Bought and paid for by the initial group of seven HMS missionaries and colonists and settled by their descendants, the purpose of Kroondal was clear. Its community was to provide a bulwark against the spectre of assimilation that threatened to undermine the identity of the second generation of German HMS immigrants.⁹¹ To this end, the community wasted little time in prioritising the forming of its Lutheran congregation that, along with a small school, was to serve as the centre-pins of its communal life. For the school, this had initially meant the use of an abandoned hut, but with its numbers growing, the decision was soon made to invest in a bigger building that became the impetus for the construction of what became the settlement's church.⁹²

⁹⁰ H. Behrens & I. Behrens, *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989*. 1989. pp. 14-15, 37-39, 46-47.

⁹¹ T. Wenhold, "Die Geschichte Kroondals". *Afrikanischer Heimatkalender*. 1970. p. 88.

⁹² T. Wenhold, "Die Geschichte Kroondals". *Afrikanischer Heimatkalender*. 1970. p. 94.

Therefore, contracting a newly immigrated German builder, the new church was designed in a style typical of those found in the hamlets of northern Germany. Thus, with its structure finally completed in 1896, the Kroondal congregation laid out its founding charter or *Stiftungsurkunde*⁹³ that thereby also provides one of the best indications of the convictions held by the settlement's founders.⁹⁴

In the name of the Holy Trinity. Amen

1. The **KROONDAL** congregation is and will continue to be Evangelical Lutheran.
2. As such, the norms and guiding principles that will govern the congregation's tenets and their lives will be in accordance with the Sacred Text, Old - and New Testaments, divinely inspired and therefore God's word.
3. The congregation stands steadfastly bound to the Lutheran Confession, as it is represented by: the Apostles', Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds, the Augsburg Confession, Luther's Small and Large Catechism, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Formula of Concord.
4. The congregation is founded in close connection with the Hermannsburg Mission in the firm hope that it and its representatives will sustain the congregation with the Gospel.
5. The congregation expects that the Superintendent of the Hermannsburg Mission in South Africa will undertake a yearly visit to the Church and School. The congregation will ensure that the traveling costs will be reimbursed.
6. Any disagreement between the Pastor and the congregation, serious transgressions in church regulations and difficult questions pertaining to marriage will be referred to the Mission's Superintendent; The final decision on all these matters rests with the Mission's Directorate in Germany.

⁹³ H. Behrens & I. Behrens. *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989.* 1989. p. 83.

⁹⁴ E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996.* 1996. pp. 9-10; Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwietring, *Gemeindechronik 1895-1966.* 1966. p. 1.

7. The community of Kroondal, or the owners of Kroondal will provide the congregation, at no extra cost, with the allocated land for the building of the church as well as the adjoining *erf* that is to be used for the church and the school, as long as the congregation is Evangelical Lutheran.

8. The community of Kroondal pledges to provide the out-lying members of the congregation with an encampment and grazing for their draft animals for the duration of their visits pertaining to church matters.

9. The compilation of a congregational charter will be undertaken once the congregation has secured the services of a pastor.⁹⁵
(Own translation)

It is with the points four, five and six in particular, that the Kroondal *Stiftungsurkunde* (charter) underscores the centrality of the community's connection to the HMS. As with the other German HMS settlements in the Natal Colony and ZAR, the reliance upon the HMS to provide the pastoral care of its congregants stands out as a defining feature of its organisational identity. This is of fundamental importance in that the congregation of Kroondal thereby regarded itself as a direct extension of the Hermannsburg Missionary Society in Germany and, therefore, also falling under the supervision of its directorship. As it was, the first pastor to devote himself to its community was the HMS Missionary Christian Müller who had initially purchased the farm for his Black African congregants from Phalane. Although this initiative had failed, many of the members of Missionary Müller's Baphalane congregation had followed him to Kroondal after he had established himself there in 1889. These had formed a community on the neighbouring farm of *Oorzaak* that Müller had purchased exclusively for his family and where he erected a small mission church with which to serve the members of his Black congregation. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the Black church community of Kroondal predates those of the White, German community by at least five years⁹⁶ and interesting too that its congregations, though both Lutheran and indeed, both filial to the HMS, have remained distinctively separate over the course of their histories.

⁹⁵ M. Melck, *Die Afrikadeutschen of Kroondal*. (Masters Dissertation). 2012. pp. 56-57; H. Behrens & I. Behrens. *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989*. 1989. p. 83.

⁹⁶ H. Behrens & I. Behrens. *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989*. 1989. pp. 8, 84.

The Behrens family at *Waaikraal*

Where the Kroondal settlement cannot be regarded as the first collective initiative to have been undertaken by the local HMS missionaries - that honour belonging to the small, self-funded German school called *Morgensonne* (morning sun) that had been built further along the Magaliesberg in 1876⁹⁷ - other interested parties were soon drawn into buying a share in the property.⁹⁸ Although August Behrens (then aged twenty five) had not had the means to be counted among one of these, his modest farming operation had been enough to provide a small living for himself and his mother on his uncle's *Waaikraal* property. As it was, even though his mother and brother's emigration had coincided with the discovery of gold on the ZAR's Witwatersrand in mid-1886,⁹⁹ the effects of the growing industry to the south had not yet begun to be felt across the region.¹⁰⁰ It was, therefore, not surprising that his younger brother, Georg, had soon left the farm to seek a living for himself as a carpenter in the town of Heidelberg to the south of Johannesburg. As for August, the prospects of continuing to eke out a meagre existence from his small piece of farmland soon ceased to be an attractive option and it did not take long before he accepted an offer to begin to trade as a travelling merchant instead.

It was an opportunity that, as in the past, had come about through the commercial contacts of his missionary uncle through which August began to trade in hides that could be sold on the Pretoria market. Thus, with the profits of this trade improving, August next set about establishing a small shop on his uncle's *Bethanie* mission station that by the end of 1889 had begun to pay handsome dividends.¹⁰¹ In fact, the business went so well that by the following year a purpose built shop had been erected on a section of the HMS's property for which he had to pay its organisation twenty percent of the shop's annual profit. In the same vein, August also had to pay the Bakwena ba Mogopa chieftan, Mmamogale,¹⁰² seventy pounds per year for the right to trade on the tribe's locale. Interestingly, he even employed his uncle, the Missionary Wilhelm Behrens, to keep the books as well as to conduct the shop's

⁹⁷ H. Pape, *'Morgensonne' 1876-1976*. 1976. pp. 1, 4-5.

⁹⁸ H. Behrens & I. Behrens, *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989*. 1989. p. 14-15.

⁹⁹ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 39.

¹⁰⁰ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. p. 65.

¹⁰¹ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 41-42.

¹⁰² A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 76.

correspondence for which he agreed to remunerate him with a percentage of the business's annual take.

Yet, just as it seemed as if August Behrens's fortunes had begun to improve, both he and his mother were struck down by malaria in March 1890. While August would eventually recover in the weeks thereafter, his mother succumbed only eight days later, leaving him to convalesce in the care of his *Bethanie* relations.¹⁰³

In the wake of Marie Behrens's passing, barely two years after her immigration to Africa, the bereaved August Behrens was once again left alone on the *Waaikraal* farm with the awareness that his life would have to return to one resembling that of a bachelor. Lonely, and by his own admission, "unwilling to let his household deteriorate", he soon announced his engagement to Dora Wenhold, the daughter of the HMS Missionary, Hermann Wenhold of *Kana*.¹⁰⁴ It was a match that had apparently been in the making for some time given that the pair had already been acquainted during the first week of August's arrival in the ZAR in 1880. However, with the changing circumstances in August's life, Dora's parents had agreed to a shortened engagement period so that the wedding duly took place three months later on 17 July at the *Kana* Mission Station. With the festivities completed, the young couple of August and Dora Behrens undertook the eight-hour-long journey back to *Waaikraal* two days later to settle into their new life together. In this respect, August notes that it was a happy beginning even if his wife (as his mother before her) was soon confronted with the loneliness of life on the farm, writing that while there were other (White) families on the neighbouring properties, these were all "Boers" (*Buren*) with whom they had virtually no contact, nor seemed to desire any.¹⁰⁵

It was within the bounds of this relatively insular setting that August and Dora Behrens welcomed the beginning of their family with the birth of their first three children between 1891 and 1894.¹⁰⁶ While the seasonal scourge of malaria continued to plague the entire family, the hard work during the fifteen years since August's immigration to Africa had begun to pay dividends in a way that he could hardly have hoped for had he remained in Germany. In fact, not even the calamity of the Rinderpest or cattle plague, that had arrived to decimate southern Africa's herds

¹⁰³ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 46-47.

¹⁰⁴ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 47-48.

¹⁰⁵ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 49.

¹⁰⁶ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 49.; A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt...* 1975. p. 2.

in 1896, had proved an insurmountable obstacle given that August had made the transition from farmer to tradesman some years before.¹⁰⁷ Fuelling this success was the rapid growth of the Witwatersrand mines and the town of Johannesburg that had at last begun to create the demand with which to revive the ZAR's flagging economy. To this effect, August's trade had boomed and all forms of produce began to command increasingly favourable prices so that by 1894 he had been able to purchase his own farm some fifty kilometres to the south of *Bethanie*. As was the case at *Waaikraal*, Behrens's new property bordered onto another HMS mission station, in this case it was the station of *Ebernezzer* that was the home of the Missionary Hans-Peter Jordt.¹⁰⁸ Putting the farm to work, Behrens began by constructing a small dam with which to support a plantation of fruit trees along with a reasonable crop of wheat and tobacco. Interestingly, he also writes that he soon thereafter decided to contract a young man from Germany to manage the operation and who would presumably have been able to lodge with Missionary Jordt and his family.¹⁰⁹ It was a decision that presents an intriguing parallel to his own experience as a young immigrant to Africa and while no further information is available on who this young man might have been, it is feasible to suggest that he was probably an acquaintance from Hermannsburg, Germany. Whether or not this was the case, the decision to sponsor and employ a young German as opposed to contracting one among the local community must have made sufficient financial sense to August Behrens for him to have entered into such an agreement. But, more importantly, and for the purposes of this thesis, it brings to light yet another example of the chain migration that had been given its initial impetus by the ventures of the HMS.

The role of the HMS in facilitating the immigration of a substantial branch of the Behrens family to Africa, represents an important example of the extent to which its organisation drew upon the general desire of German populations to migrate. Beginning with the experience of Wilhelm and Lena Behrens, it would seem that the desire for a new and different life was at least as important as the possibility for improved opportunities. Similarly, while it is impossible to discount the influence of religious fervour that existed in Hermannsburg at the time, the life experience of August Behrens offers the invaluable perspective of a man who was undeniably only

¹⁰⁷ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 56; N. Jacobs, *African History through Sources, Volume 1. Contexts and Everyday Experiences. c. 1850-1946*. 2014. p. 78.

¹⁰⁸ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 55, 57; H. Pape, *Hermannsburg Missionare in Südafrika*. 1986. p. 89.

¹⁰⁹ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 55.

using the HMS network to emigrate. In doing so it is obvious that the growth of an extended 'Hermannsburg' community abroad had allowed for new and viable economic opportunities to become accessible to those who could find the means to travel. Indeed, every aspect of August's ability to generate funds during the first fifteen years of his time in Africa, was directly facilitated by his family's connection to the HMS. Beginning with his work at Missionary Fuls' farm on *Leporro* as well as the development of his uncle's *Waaikraal* property, his subsequent success as a trader was similarly due to the commercial connections that his uncle had maintained. Here it is noticeable from August Behrens's autobiography that the HMS's Christian mission and the practice of its missionaries' commercial pursuits were indeed substantially intertwined - this to the extent that the success of mission stations such as *Bethanie* appear to have been determined by the revenue that could be gleaned from the surrounding community. It is an aspect that although touched upon in studies such as Hasselhorn's *Bauernmission in Südafrika*, can well be regarded as a potential avenue for future research in order to clarify the extent of the HMS's commercial activities during the nineteenth century.¹¹⁰ Either way, the existence of both an established migratory path, along with the presence of relations and commercial opportunities at the point of August Behrens's destination, all contributed to the process of his and his family's relocation.

It is when surveying the beginning of the HMS's facilitated emigration to South Africa, that the strength of the missionary organisation's network that created the framework for the diasporic German community that was to follow, becomes evident. As such, economic interdependence was further reinforced by the HMS missionaries and colonists' desire to continue in the ethnic and cultural awareness of their German heritage. They are factors that led to the creation of German settlements, such as Kroondal, as the means to secure both the livelihood and identity of the next generation of its descendants. Therefore, it is with a view to the development of the Kroondal community along with its members' experience during the upheaval of the South African War, that the next chapter investigates the growing association of the HMS immigrants with their adopted *Heimat* or home.

¹¹⁰ R. Beck, "Bibles and Beads: Missionaries as Traders in Southern Africa in the Early Nineteenth Century". *Journal of African History*.(30) 1989. pp. 211-225.

Chapter 3 *Das Heimatrecht zu Erwerben* - Earning the right to belong 1896-1909

Jameson Raid

At a time when August Behrens and others within the ZAR were beginning to profit from the benefits of the rapid industrialisation that the discovery of gold had brought to the country, the burgeoning wealth of its region had also brought with it the rumblings of increasing political disaffection. They were tensions that were born out of the sheer size of the Witwatersrand gold reserves that were soon estimated to be unrivalled throughout the rest of the world.¹ And, it was due to the significance of this discovery, along with the unprecedented influx of foreign miners and capitalists that it had precipitated, that the developments on the Witwatersrand would soon catapult the region into the catastrophe of the South African War (1899-1902).² Leading this charge was the British mining magnate, Cecil John Rhodes, whose operation on the Witwatersrand mines had been frustrated by what he and other British investors regarded as the problematic politics of the ZAR.³ At the heart of their grievances was the ZAR government's penchant for placing heavy taxes on the flow of mining related materials that, along with state sanctioned monopolies on commodities such as dynamite, had begun to restrict the profitability of the gold mines. Placed together with the ZAR government's refusal to allow foreign miners and capitalists or *Uitlanders*, the right to vote, the political frustrations of British expatriates had become a prominent aspect of life in Johannesburg.⁴ It followed that by 1895, Rhodes and his associates made the decision to foment an *Uitlander* revolt with which they hoped to justify an armed intervention by members of Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BSAC).⁵

It was in the ensuing fiasco that was to become of Rhodes's conspiracy, that the community of HMS Germans and their descendants living in the ZAR were first drawn into the events that would mark the spiral into the South African War. Up until this point, those few references that can be found from the German community

¹ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. p. 65.

² D. Cammack, *The Rand at War, 1899-1902: The Witwatersrand and the Anglo-Boer War*. 1990. pp. 8-9; K. Shillington, *History of Africa*. 1995. pp. 320-321.

³ R. Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power*. 1988. p. 516.

⁴ K. Shillington, *History of Africa*. 1995. pp. 329-330.

⁵ R. Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power*. 1988. pp. 516-517; C. van Onselen, *The cowboy capitalist : John Hays Hammond, the American West and the Jameson Raid*. 2017.

regarding Johannesburg are generally limited to the less than favourable social circumstances of its expanding population while, nevertheless, acknowledging its economic importance within the region.⁶ Although this is certainly not enough to infer that the ZAR's German community had remained unaware of the political stirrings that had been rising on the Witwatersrand, it does suggest that its own conservative and agrarian values probably placed little interest in the cosmopolitan environment of the industrialisation taking place to the south.⁷ With this as a backdrop, the events that took place in the last days of 1895 undoubtedly came as a surprise for the German communities. Beginning on the evening of 29 December, a column of six hundred Rhodesian Policemen and other volunteers from Rhodes' BSAC crossed into the ZAR from southern Bechuanaland in the hope of triggering an *Uitlander* uprising. Led by Rhodes' associate, Dr Leander Starr Jameson, the Jameson Raid as it became known, intended to cover the three hundred or so kilometres to Johannesburg before the Boer Republic could muster its forces in response.⁸ It was an audacious and ill-conceived plan that had already lost some of its initiative before the troop had even crossed the Bechuanaland border. The Boers on the other hand, having become aware of Jameson's intentions, had scrambled to mobilise its citizen army that in the absence of a professional military was comprised of a series of regional militia corps or commandos with which to intercept the invading column.⁹ To effect this mobilisation, dispatch riders were sent through the Rustenburg district with the news of the call up to which all of the able bodied male burghers were expected to respond. Writing in his diary, August Behrens's father-in-law, the Missionary Hermann Wehnhold of *Kana*, recorded the following in the mission station's annals:

Mit dem Anfang dieses Jahres (1896), fingen auch zugleich grosse Plagen u. Leiden an, in diesem sonst Gold und irdischen Schätzen reichem Lande. Ja es war nur Gottes züchtigende Hand die über die Völker kam und die sehr nöthig war. Schon am letzten Tage des Jahres 1895 gingen oder viel mehr flogen die Eilboten durchs Land die Bauern auf zu rufen, denn ein Feind kam

⁶ Kroondal Church Archive. J. Penzhorn, *Lebenslauf und Erinnerungen aus dem Leben von Johannes Heinrich Carl Penzhorn*. 1943. pp. 6-7.

⁷ D. Cammack, *The Rand at War, 1899-1902: The Witwatersrand and the Anglo-Boer War*. 1990. p. 1.

⁸ T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*. 1979. pp. 1-4.

⁹ D. Saks, "The Jameson Raid: A Failed Dress Rehearsal for the Anglo Boer War". *South African Military History Journal*. Vol. 12. No. 5. June 2003. (Access: 2017-04-05) <<http://samilitaryhistory.org/vol125ds.html>>; C. van Onselen, *The cowboy capitalist : John Hays Hammond, the American West and the Jameson Raid*. 2017.

*ins Land gefallen, nämlich der Engländer Dr. Jamison, kam mit einer Schar von 800 Mann mit Kanonen und allerlei Mordwaffen, gleich einem Freibeuter herein das Land zu erobern. So mussten auch 4 meiner Söhne, sofort in Dienst der jüngste dieser 4 musste die Comandierorder weiter bringen, die andern 3 noch am Abend vor Neujahr zu Pferde fort um sich an andern, nämlich am Neujahrstag morgen den Übrigen an zu schliessen um den Feind entgegen zu treten...*¹⁰

With the start of this year (1896) the beginning of great plagues and suffering came into this land that is otherwise so rich with gold and earthly treasures. It was (undoubtedly) the necessary hand of God that descended over the people in order to chide them and indeed, this was very necessary. Already on the last day of the year 1895, messengers rode, or rather flew across the countryside to call up the Boers as an enemy had invaded the land, namely, the Englishman Dr. Jamison (sic), who came with a host of 800 men, canons and all manner of murderous weapons to conquer the country. Four of my sons also had to rush into service of which the youngest was tasked to carry the “commando order” onwards. The other three departed on horse back that same evening before the new year to enable them to join the others on new years morning and engage the enemy... (own translation)

As the call up spread, others throughout the Magaliesberg district set aside whatever they were doing, grabbed their rifles and bandoliers and rode south to meet up with the Boer commandant Piet Cronje.¹¹ Among those also answering the call were the younger men of the Kroondal settlement who like the sons of Missionar Wenhold, had been born in the ZAR and were, therefore, also counted among its citizens. For the young men of Kroondal, the dispatch rider arrived as they were working together in erecting the roof of the Kroondal church that had been begun by the community earlier that year.¹² Riding together these bands of predominantly farmers and countrymen rushed southwards to intercept the approaching threat. The first of these units made contact with Jameson’s column around midnight on New Year’s Eve, but with most of their colleagues still en route and with the commando not yet at full strength the Boer leadership decided to limit their engagements to harrying the tail end of Jameson’s force. Then, after a further two days of light skirmishing and with

¹⁰ H. Wenhold, *Chronik der Missionstation Kana von Missionar Hermann Wenhold*. p. 78.

¹¹ T. Stapleton, *Encyclopaedia of African Colonial Conflicts*. 2016. p. 379.

¹² Kroondal Church Archive. K. Kahl, “Gemeindechronik” 1895-1966. 1966. p. 1.

the sight of the Johannesburg mines looming on the horizon, the ZAR commando was finally ready to bring the matter to a head by blocking the road on the outskirts of the town of Krugersdorp. The battle that ensued proved to be devastating to the English force with seventeen of its men killed and fifty five more wounded before the situation was deemed to be hopeless. The result was that by nine o' clock on the 2 January what remained of Jameson's column surrendered to the Boer commando that for its part had only lost one man.¹³

With this ignominious end to the Raid and with Dr Jameson and his colleagues imprisoned in Pretoria, Rhodes, as the then prime minister of the Cape Colony, was forced to resign in the ensuing fall out. Yet, despite the fact that the Jameson Raid was not only handled fairly magnanimously by the ZAR government, but also swiftly condemned by the British administration, it would nevertheless set in motion a chain of events that would begin to foment the war to come. One of the most important developments in this regard was the involvement of Germany's emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II, whose attempts to extend the influence of the newly formed German Empire soon served to escalate the tensions within the region.¹⁴ They were tensions that had already begun as a result of Germany's decision to assist the ZAR in financing a new railway line from Pretoria to the Portuguese port in Delagoa Bay. It was an initiative that would allow the landlocked ZAR to circumvent Britain's influence along the coast and, thereby, set the stage for its realignment towards other European nations. Therefore, it came as no surprise when in the immediate aftermath of the Jameson Raid, the German Kaiser sent a very public telegram of support to President Kruger, congratulating him on warding off the attack "without appealing for the help of "friendly powers".¹⁵ Somewhat predictably, the "Kruger Telegram" as it came to be known, set off a storm of protest from the British press and government who regarded this latest excursion of Kaiser Wilhelm's international ambition as a clear infringement of British interests in southern Africa. For his part, the German Kaiser did little to ease the mood when only two weeks later he gave a widely publicised speech in commemoration of the founding of the German Empire and used the occasion to call upon the unity of all Germans living abroad. In doing so, the Kaiser declared his ambition to draw upon the considerable extent of German

¹³ D. Saks, "The Jameson Raid: A Failed Dress Rehearsal for the Anglo Boer War". *South African Military History Journal*. Vol. 12. No. 5. June 2003. (Access: 2017-04-05) <<http://samilitaryhistory.org/vol125ds.html>>.

¹⁴ J. Muller, *Churchill as Peacemaker*. 2002. p. 123.

¹⁵ C. Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*. 2000. p. 132.

immigration across the world which he hoped would thereby help to secure Germany's influence as a global power.¹⁶

It was into this period of Germany's new *Weltpolitik* that the second generation of German HMS immigrants were beginning to establish themselves as adults. The *Weltpolitik* would, therefore, also have an important influence upon the nature of the German settlements that were being formed at the time. Indeed, while the development of politics in Germany seems to have been given little attention by the first generation of HMS immigrants, the signs of its growing influence in the region were nonetheless beginning to be shown. This was not only evident by the construction of the Delagoa Bay railway line, but also the rapid acquisition of some of the latest German rifles and artillery (along with a number of key defensive fortifications) that were purchased by the ZAR in the wake of the Jameson Raid.¹⁷ However, despite the rising prominence of a new German national identity, the realities of life in the western ZAR continued to be of far more pressing concern to its German inhabitants than the development of German political ambitions. This is evident when considering that barely a few months after the Jameson Raid, the Magaliesberg region suffered the ravages of a locust plague before being engulfed shortly thereafter by the aforementioned Rinderpest. Then, the next year (1897) another plague of locusts descended upon the land followed in the autumn by the rampant outbreak of malaria.¹⁸ It was the beginning of what came to be known as the *Fieberjahre* or "fever years" by the German community living throughout the western Transvaal and into Bechuanaland. Among those hardest hit were the small German community of *Hermannskraal* on the western edge of the ZAR where virtually all of its inhabitants were heavily afflicted by the disease. It followed that the period between 1897 and 1898 spelled the end of the *Hermannskraal* settlement as its members resolved to leave the bushveld and head for more temperate locales such as Kroondal.¹⁹

¹⁶ S. Gross, *Export Empire: German Soft Power in Southeastern Europe, 1890-1945*. 2015. p. 31; C. Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*. 2000. pp. 133-134.

¹⁷ D. Panagos, *The Mystery of the ZAR Forts of Pretoria*. Vol. 13, No. 1. June 2004. (Access: 2017-04-06) <<http://samilitaryhistory.org/vol131dp.html>>

¹⁸ H. Wenhold, *Chronik der Missionstation Kana von Missionar Hermann Wenhold*. pp. 80-82.

¹⁹ H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. pp. 18; Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Gemeindechronik 1895-1966*. 1966. p. 4.

South African War

Thus, it was at a time when the population of the Western ZAR were still preoccupied with the onslaughts of plagues and disease that the political manoeuvring between the ZAR government and its British counterpart began to gather steam. For its part and despite the embarrassing debacle of the Jameson Raid, the British colonial office had taken up the batten of *Uitlander* interests in the ZAR that by 1897 fell to the new British High Commissioner for South Africa, Sir Alfred Milner.²⁰ As an ardent imperialist, Milner's ambitions meant that he was prepared to bring whatever political and military force to bear that would ensure the ZAR's submission to overall British hegemony. In response, and despite the ZAR's eventual willingness to agree to significant concessions regarding the *Uitlander* demands, it soon became clear to the ZAR's leadership that Milner would not settle for anything other than complete control over the Republic.²¹ Therefore, with approximately 27 000 British troops already stationed in its South African colonies and with substantial numbers of reinforcements en route, the aged ZAR President, Paul Kruger, finally consented that the prospect of war had become inevitable. In response the ZAR and its ally, the Orange Free State Republic, issued an ultimatum to the British government demanding a dramatic de-escalation of its military preparations in the region on 9 October 1899. However, when no response was forthcoming after the forty eight hour deadline had elapsed, the Boer Republics declared war in the hope that a rapid mobilisation of their own forces would enable them to gain the upper hand before the arrival of more British troops tipped the balance against them.²²

It was within this context that the settlement of Kroondal, as with the other inhabitants of the ZAR, faced the uncertainty of what a war with Britain might bring. With the proud landmark of its new church, a mill, and the first homes of its settlement completed, the general hope had been that the hardest years were now behind them.²³ Indeed, despite the previous instances of antagonism between various HMS missionaries and the surrounding Boer farmers, (as discussed in Chapter 2) the settlement's support for the ZAR and its president, Paul Kruger, appear to have been unwavering by the time of the war. This is well evident from a

²⁰ T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*. 1979. pp. 11-12.

²¹ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. p. 247.

²² A. Wessels, *The Anglo-Boer War 1889-1902: White Man's War, Black Man's War, Traumatic War*. 2011. pp. 20-21

²³ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Gemeindechronik 1895-1966*. 1966. p. 4.

letter written by Louise Müller, the wife of Kroondal's pastor, Missionary Christian Müller, to her brother in Germany in April 1899 regarding an unexpected visit from the president to the *Ortschaft* (settlement):

Lezten Freitag kam der President Ohm Paul Krüger hier vorbei mit ein ziemlich gorßes Gefolge. Er fuhr in einem Wagen mit 8 Pfärde bespand, die jungen Leute haben auch tüchtig geschossen, nahe bei der Kirche und Schule wo H. Lange wohnt da hat er ein par Stunden Ausgespand, und ist den nach Rüstenburg... Es war eine große Ehre, daß er hier auf Kroondal so nahe bei Rüstenburg ausspante, aber seit den letzten Kriegen, wo die Deutschen von Kroondal, und auch unser Bruder Georg sich nicht zurück gehalten haben, sind die Deutschen sehr in seiner Achtung gestiegen.²⁴

Last Friday the president, Oom Paul Kruger came past (Kroondal) with a substantial entourage. He was travelling in a carriage spanned with eight horses and the young men accompanying him fired off a number of shots. He stopped for a few hours close to the church and school, near to where H. Lange lives, after which he continued on to Rustenburg... It was a great honour that he stopped here in Kroondal when he was already so close to Rustenburg, but since the last war where the Germans of Kroondal, as also our brother Georg, did not refrain from doing their duty, the Germans have risen in his estimation. (Own translation)

According to this letter, the state president's arrival and brief sojourn in the settlement certainly seem to have represented an important sense of acknowledgement for the community of Kroondal. This is further evident when considering that President Kruger is said personally to have donated fifty pounds towards the building expenses of the Kroondal church, although it is not clear whether or not this had taken place before or after the Kroondaler's involvement in the actions surrounding the Jameson Raid.²⁵ It does lend sufficient credence to the suggestion that the relationship between the surrounding Boers and particularly those of the second generation of the region's German inhabitants had become quite genial. Therefore, when the commando call up was issued late in September 1899, more than ten days before the ZAR's ultimatum to Britain, it is not surprising that the

²⁴ R. Ottermann, (ed.), *Pastor Christian Müller (1836-1916) und Frau Luise Müller, geb. Ottermann (1844-1930) von Kroondal*. Stellenbosch, 1995. p. 27.

²⁵ (Anonymous) *Die alte Lutherische Kirche in Kroondal*. p. 9.

younger generation of Germans across the ZAR were by no means reticent in reporting for duty.²⁶

Among those assembling with the commandos were the brothers August and Georg Behrens who made their way to Rustenburg from *Bethanie*. However, according to August Behrens's memoirs, both were sent back by their field cornet in order to continue operating the shop and mill at *Bethanie* that would service the families in that region.²⁷ This was not the case for most others including the sons of Missionary Hermann Wenhold, Behrens's father-in-law. Of his six sons, four were immediately admitted for service while the missionary had managed to keep the youngest son, Karl, at home and with the second eldest, Hermann, in the Hermannsburg seminary in Germany at the time.²⁸ While the two Behrens brothers returned home, the ZAR's commandos struck out onto the offensive after war was declared on 12 October. Moving into the British Natal and Cape Colonies, the commandos of the ZAR and OFS republics quickly laid siege to several of the more prominent towns including Ladysmith in Natal and Kimberley and Mafeking in the Northern Cape.

For a section of the Rustenburg commando, that included many of the German burghers, their posting was to guard the borderland region between the ZAR and British Protectorate of Bechuanaland against the possibility of British incursions from Rhodesia.²⁹ It was from this region, already in the first month of the war, that Missionary Wenhold received the news that his fourth eldest son had been wounded in one of the initial engagements on that front. The news had arrived via hearsay, having been written in a private letter of a ZAR burgher that included a brief reference to one of their party, a certain Georg Wenhold, having been wounded, but without providing any further details. Receiving the news, the Wenholds at *Kana* were thrown into consternation and with the lack of information feared the worst. However, it did not take long before the injured son duly arrived home in the care of one of his brothers and having received only a flesh wound on the sole of his foot, quickly put the minds of his parents to rest.³⁰

²⁶ N. Behrens (ed.), *Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940*. (unpublished) p. 60.

²⁷ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 58.

²⁸ H. Wenhold, *Chronik der Missionstation Kana von Missionar Hermann Wenhold*. p. 92; H. Behrens, & Wenhold, J. (ed.), *Wenholdstreffen 1987*. 1987. p. 1.

²⁹ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. p. 250; H. Wenhold, *Chronik der Missionstation Kana von Missionar Hermann Wenhold*. pp. 93-94.

³⁰ H. Wenhold, *Chronik der Missionstation Kana von Missionar Hermann Wenhold*. pp. 94-95.

For others of the Rustenburg commando, their time on the Bechuanaland border would not be as fortunate. They were circumstances that began with a British attack on the Boer encampment at Derdepoort in which the use of Bakgatla auxiliaries, who had been armed with breach loading Martini Henry rifles by the British, created a significant controversy at the time. The engagement, that began at dawn, saw twenty ZAR burghers killed including two women and a number of other women and children captured by the Bakgatla before the battle ended.³¹ Outraged at the thought of the British inciting Black African support and indeed, the prospect of a widespread rebellion among the repressed Black ZAR population, the ZAR government sent an immediate protest to the British high command.³² Although this was soon followed by a brutal retaliatory raid by the Boers against the Bagkatla in which one hundred and fifty Bakgatla were killed, the psychological effect of the events at Derdepoort had important repercussions for the ZAR government and its citizens. Accordingly, those members of the Rustenburg commando who had initially been sent home were quickly re-called into service, including August and Georg Behrens at *Bethanie*.³³ Despatched to Derdepoort, the Behrens brothers spanned a small wagon to carry their provisions, clothes and other items with which they covered the almost three hundred kilometers to Derdepoort in three days. There they found themselves in the company of virtually all of the Kroondal Germans who were part of the three hundred and fifty man garrison under the field cornet Jan du Plessis.³⁴

Although the next months at Derdepoort proceeded without incident, the beginning of high summer at the start of 1900 brought with it a new enemy against which the commando at Derdepoort had little defence. As in the preceding years, the rampant scourge of malaria had followed the onset of the region's summer rains so that by mid February more than thirty of the little over three hundred men in the camp lay ill. By March the toll had risen even further to include August Behrens who, no doubt delirious with fever, had fainted from the top of a wagon and was thereafter too weak to stand. Appreciating the situation, the camp commandant ordered the laager be moved one hundred kilometres east in the hope of finding a more temperate location there. It was a journey that August Behrens undertook racked with fever in the back

³¹ R. Morton., *Journal of African History*. "Linchwe I and the Kgatla Campaign in the South African War, 1899-1902". No. 26, 1985. p. 179.

³² V. Kuitenbrouwer, *War of Words: Dutch Pro-Boer Propaganda and the South African War (1899-1902)*. 2012. p. 211.

³³ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 58.

³⁴ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 58-59.

of a wagon and that shortly thereafter resulted in his being sent home to his family in *Kana* to recover.³⁵ Here he joined two other of Missionary Wenhold's sons, Adolf and Theodor, who had likewise been afflicted by malaria, in a convalescence that would last almost two months. Of these three, little hope was given to Theodor who had contracted cerebral malaria, though in the end all three men managed to make a sufficient recovery.³⁶ This was, however, not the case for August's uncle, the Missionary Wilhelm Behrens of *Bethanie*, for whom the onslaught of the disease proved to be too much, claiming his life,³⁷ as with so many others in April that year.³⁸

It was in this terrible summer of malarial suffering and the ensuing period of August Behrens's convalescence that the initiative of the war had already begun to swing in favour of the now greatly reinforced British army.³⁹ Driving northwards out of the Cape, the British general, Lord Roberts, undertook a sweeping offensive to relieve the besieged garrisons in the Northern Cape while another British force in Natal managed to relieve Ladysmith despite dogged resistance from the Boers on that front.⁴⁰ In the face of increasingly overwhelming odds, the Boer commandos began to lose heart so that by March of 1900 the way was open for Roberts to effect a rapid advance towards the OFS capital of Bloemfontein. The city was duly taken without any opposition on 13 March, followed by the capture of Johannesburg on the last day of May and Pretoria within a week thereafter.⁴¹

With both capitals having fallen, Paul Kruger fleeing into exile and many of the commandos in disarray, the war seemed to be over and August Behrens records that he surrendered his firearms to a passing British unit. In doing so, Behrens, as with so many others in the Western Transvaal was issued with a "residential pass" and a certificate stating that he had handed in his weapons.⁴² While a great many of those men who had formed part of the Rustenburg Commando similarly handed in their weapons, being either ill but mostly disheartened at the fall of the Republic, what

³⁵ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 59-61.

³⁶ H. Wenhold, *Chronik der Missionstation Kana von Missionar Hermann Wenhold*. pp. 97-98.

³⁷ J. Brammer, *Was der alte Missionshof erzählt. Ein Lebensbild des Betschuanenmissionars Wilhelm Behrens*. 1950. pp. 53-54.

³⁸ August and Dora Behrens's fifth child Ernst, died during this period, aged 8 months, possibly also of malaria.

³⁹ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 60-61.

⁴⁰ A. Wessels, *The Anglo-Boer War 1889-1902: White Man's War, Black Man's War, Traumatic War*. 2011. pp. 44, 47-48, 51.

⁴¹ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. p. 251.

⁴² A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 61.

remained of the Boer leadership had already decided against its capitulation and instead embarked upon a highly mobile war against the British.⁴³ This decision, that began the protracted final phase of the conflict, would become a frustrating menace to the British commanders who, with the fall of Pretoria, had believed the war to be all but over. In particular, the Boer general Koos de la Rey undertook a spirited charge through the Western Transvaal to cajole those Burghers who had surrendered, also known as *hensoppers* (literally “hands-uppers”), back into the war.⁴⁴ Incredibly, and despite having signed their oaths of neutrality, over ninety percent of these men rejoined the commandos to begin the guerrilla warfare that would go on to become a defining aspect of the South African War.⁴⁵

Among those men who returned to the field during this time was August Behrens’s younger brother Georg.⁴⁶ In contrast, August was still suffering from recurring bouts of malarial fever, even if he had sufficiently recovered to have been able to return to *Bethanie* where he had reopened his shop and the mill that his brother had established there. Yet, with the resurgence of fighting in and around the Magaliesberg region, it did not take long before the British command began to adopt more punitive strategies in their efforts to bring the Boer commandos to heel. To this end, August writes that in October an English unit arrived at *Bethanie* in order to disable the mill whereafter they also trampled the flour that had already been prepared into the ground, leaving only those bags that had been designated to the Black community intact. It was the beginning of what became the new British scorched earth policy that sought to deny the Boer commandos the important material assistance of the surrounding civilian population. Elsewhere across the region similar actions were likewise taking place and in the settlement of Kroondal British troops had already arrived in September to disable the mill there.⁴⁷

While these events were taking place across the Magaliesberg region, life had also become increasingly difficult for those few remaining Germans living in the Marico District, as well as those living across the border in Bechuanaland. However, unlike the communities to the east, the predominant focus of those living in the western bushveld continued to be the unrelenting affliction of malaria. Although this had been

⁴³ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. pp. 251-252.

⁴⁴ P. Trew, *The Boer War Generals*. 1999. p. 229; D. Reitz, *Commando. A Journal of the Anglo-Boer War*. 1998. p. 105.; H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. p. 251.

⁴⁵ P. Trew, *The Boer War Generals*. 1999. p. 229.

⁴⁶ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 67.

⁴⁷ R. Ottermann, *Festschrift Ottermann*. 1993. p. 29.

compounded significantly by the increasing incursions of Bakgatla regiments who had begun to raid Boer farms deep into the now former ZAR,⁴⁸ the incessant presence of malarial fever initially at least seems to have been by far the more debilitating of the two. Among those most afflicted were the isolated HMS families who had chosen to remain on their posts following the worst outbreaks of fever in the preceding years.⁴⁹ One of these was the daughter of Kroondal's pastor, the missionary Christian Müller, who had married another HMS Missionary, Georg Behrens (unrelated to August Behrens) in 1891 and followed him onto the HMS mission station at Ramotswa in Bechuanaland in 1893.⁵⁰ Here the missions couple, as well as their five children, were all struck by the disease in March 1900 with the result that both the Missionary and his wife died in quick succession that same month. Receiving the news from Missionary Jensen on *Linokana*, Missionary Müller set out from Kroondal to collect the children of whom the youngest was only four months old. It was on the days long journey back that the eldest daughter also succumbed to malaria leaving the grief struck Missionary Müller weeping as he slowly made his way home.⁵¹

In other instances, those German families living in similarly isolated settings appear to have become quite reliant on the services of the surrounding Black communities to bridge the separations that they encountered as part of the circumstance of the war. This was certainly the case for the last remaining German family at *Hermannskraal* where the resident farmer, Peter Muhl, had been sent home ill from commando to find that his wife and children had left to take refuge at the closest HMS mission station of *Manuane*. Gravely ill and tended by a Black employee, Muhl succumbed to malaria soon afterwards whereupon the nameless man is said to have run the approximately fifty kilometres in order to deliver the news to his wife.⁵² In turn, the onset of the war had likewise served to cut off the Wehrmann family on *Manuane* from some of its children that were being schooled at the Morgensonne school in the ZAR. It followed that as in the previous instance, a trusted (though similarly nameless) Black employee was sent to cover the well over a hundred kilometres to deliver a message that the children's mother had sewn into his

⁴⁸ R. Morton., "Linchwe I and the Kgatla Campaign in the South African War, 1899-1902". *Journal of African History*. Vol. 26, 1985. pp. 183-184.

⁴⁹ H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. p. 18.

⁵⁰ H. Pape, *Hermannsbürger Missionare in Südafrika*. 1986. pp. 11-12.

⁵¹ R. Ottermann, (ed.), *Pastor Christian Müller (1836-1916) und Frau Luise Müller, geb. Ottermann (1844-1930) von Kroondal*. Stellenbosch, 1995. pp. 28-29.

⁵² H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. p. 18.

trousers. When seen together, the reliance that these families displayed upon the good graces of Black African individuals can be regarded as sufficient evidence that such incidents were an important aspect in the local German experiences of the South African War. In both of these examples, the virtues of trustworthiness and resourcefulness are only too evident in the men who undertook these difficult and almost certainly harrowing tasks. They are roles that, even when acknowledged, are often done so without reference to a name, particularly when the narration does not form part of an autobiography or first hand account. In this respect, the silent presence of the Black men and women who were often central to the unfolding narrative of White families on the African continent, remains a noticeable spectre in the history of these events. What is certain, however, is that in the general isolation of areas such as southern Bechuanaland, the bonds of interconnectedness and mutual reliance appear to have had an important role in defining the relationships between the HMS missionaries, their families and the surrounding Black communities.⁵³

In a similar vein, it is in recording his own experiences with the inhabitants of the HMS mission station of *Bethanie*, that August Behrens notes that both he and his uncle, the Missionary Wilhelm Behrens, benefitted from an amicable association to the Bakwena ba Mogopa under its chieftain Mmamogale.⁵⁴ It is an association that was sufficiently demonstrated as the war in the Western Transvaal entered into its protracted final phase when the British army began to remove Boer civilians and any likely sympathisers from their farms.⁵⁵ For the inhabitants of *Bethanie*, the build up to these events had already seen numerous instances in which British troops had commandeered whatever supplies they could find while moving past the mission station. This had included an incident in which one of the Black women who had been working in the Behrens household, known only as Martha, attempted to prevent an English cavalryman from raiding the geese in the mission station's coop. It was an obstruction that was not left unchecked and the unfortunate woman ended up sharing the same fate as the rest of the Behrens family only hours later.⁵⁶

Eviction and detention

⁵³ (Anonymous), *Eduard und Marie Penbhorn: 100 Jahre*. 1982. pp. 36-37.

⁵⁴ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 69, 76.

⁵⁵ V. Carruthers, *The Magaliesberg*. 2000. p. 314.

⁵⁶ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 69, 76.

The events that unfolded at *Bethanie* on 6 January 1901, and which were similarly played out across the region in that same period, began with the arrival of a squad of British soldiers (in this case an attachment of Australians) who quickly apprehended the men, including August Behrens, before taking them a short distance away from the settlement. Once these men had been removed, other members of the squad informed the remaining women that they were to be taken from their homes and gave them a short period of time to pack their most essential belongings. In the melee that ensued, the soldiers proceeded to ransack the house, raiding it for any valuables they could find while the Behrens family members were assisted in packing by their Black employees. Bundled onto a wagon, Dora Behrens (then four months pregnant), her children and relations and the brave servant Martha, were summarily carted off in the direction of Pretoria. It was about a day or two later that August Behrens was reunited with his family at a makeshift camp on Commandonek (in the vicinity of the present day Hartebeespoort dam). From here they were informed that they would all be interned at the Irene concentration camp outside of Pretoria.⁵⁷

About a hundred kilometers to the west, the settlement of Kroondal would experience a similar fate to that of August Behrens and the *Bethanie* Germans. With most of the young men still away on commando, the settlement's remaining inhabitants were likewise rounded up and taken to be interned outside of Pretoria. In this instance, however, it appears that the Kroondal residents were given a two day warning before the eviction commenced.⁵⁸ This was a "courtesy" that had certainly not been applied to the vast majority of other Afrikaner families that were given little more than a few minutes to vacate their homes. Nevertheless, the bitterness that arose amongst the German communities was palpable enough as evidenced in the letter by Luise Müller, the wife of Kroondal's missionary and Pastor, Christian Müller, to her brother in Germany, dated 21 June, 1901:

Mein Lieber Bruder wilst Dir einen kleinen Begrif davon haben wie uns zu Mute ist, so stelle Dir einmahl vor, wenn man so nach und nach, etwa in 3 bis 4 Monathen Dir all Dein Vieh und Schweine Hüner Karre Hafer Wagen Ackergerät alles so nach und nach abnähme und denn (sic) steht Abends 8 Uhr in dunkler Nacht ein Wagen vor der Thür und sagt ein hoher Herr schnell

⁵⁷ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 70-73.

⁵⁸ R. Ottermann, (ed.), *Pastor Christian Müller (1836-1916) und Frau Luise Müller, geb. Ottermann (1844-1930) von Kroondal*. Stellenbosch, 1995. pp. 38-39.

Aufladen wir spannen nicht aus es geht gleich weiter, doch sei es zu ihrer Ehre gesagt daß sie es uns 2 Tage vorher haben wissen lassen, daß wir uns dazu Rüsten sollten, daß habe sie aber nur bei uns Deutschen gethan, ach die armen Bauerfrauen, die mußten zum theil auf den Wagen, ohne eine Deke, so wie sie gerade waren, und kaum waren sie weg da sahen sie wie all ihr Gut ein Raub der Flammen ward, was die nicht davon einstechen konnten, die Herrn Eng.⁵⁹

My dear brother, if you wish to gain a little insight into our current circumstances, then imagine for a moment that, one by one, over the course of 3-4 months, all your cattle, pigs, chickens, cart, wagon and farming implements are bit by bit taken from you. And then, one dark evening at eight o' clock, there stands a wagon at your door and a lofty lord announces to you that you need to load up quickly as they are not out-spanning and will be leaving shortly. Yet, let them be given credit for the fact that they warned us two days in advance that we should prepare ourselves, although they only did this for the Germans, but oh, the poor Boer women, some of whom had to board the wagon just as they were, without a blanket, and no sooner were these on their way when they witnessed flames burning everything that the lords of England couldn't carry away.

(Own translation)

If the German settlement of Kroondal was given some preferential treatment in the removal of its inhabitants, then it did not provide them with any assurances that their belongings would be left intact for them to return to. On the contrary, within the first months of their internment, news began to arrive that looting had been taking place in the settlement and the surrounding areas.⁶⁰ In spite of this, the benefit of their nationality continued to work in their favour when, after less than two weeks in the Irene concentration camp, a protest by the HMS missionaries to the German consulate secured their release⁶¹ to be housed in the town of Pretoria instead.⁶² Taken together they are grounds enough to suggest that the British government

⁵⁹ R. Ottermann, (ed.), *Pastor Christian Müller (1836-1916) und Frau Luise Müller, geb. Ottermann (1844-1930) von Kroondal*. Stellenbosch, 1995. pp. 38-39.

⁶⁰ R. Ottermann, (ed.), *Pastor Christian Müller (1836-1916) und Frau Luise Müller, geb. Ottermann (1844-1930) von Kroondal*. Stellenbosch, 1995. p. 39.

⁶¹ No further mention is made regarding the fate of the Black women, Martha, who had been removed from *Bethanie* together with the Behrens family in January 1901.

⁶² A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 72-73.

retained a significant degree of sensitivity towards the potential impact that the mistreatment of German citizens might have on Germany's involvement in the conflict. As it was, in the years following the Jameson Raid and the Kaiser's provocative attempts to offer support to the embattled ZAR, the British government had been at pains to ensure that Germany would remain neutral in the event of a war.⁶³ Therefore, it is likely that the HMS's missionaries' complaints would have been speedily attended to and, as such, also spared them from the worst depredations of hunger and disease that eventually claimed so many of the internees before the end of the conflict.⁶⁴

Although this concession had initially only been intended for the German HMS missionaries and their families, August Behrens managed to be included in the list of internees who would be released to move to Pretoria. It was a freedom that was nevertheless a prerequisite for his being able to provide for himself and his family as well as requiring him to present himself (presumably at the local police station) every two days.⁶⁵ Renting a house in Bloed street and later moving to a larger one in Pretorius street, August Behrens also took it upon himself to provide accommodation to his father and mother-in-law, the Missionary and *Frau* Wenhold who had been interned in Krugersdorp. These were soon joined by his brother-in-law who had been taken prisoner and held in Greenpoint, Cape Town before similarly being released on condition that he could be cared for with the rest of the family.⁶⁶ All together, this brought the number of residents in the Pretoria house to six adults and three children, all of whom needed to be provided for without an obvious income. Faced with this dilemma, August applied his business acumen by purchasing old willow trees which he and the other men sawed and chopped into firewood that could be sold on the Pretoria market. The venture was successful, but nevertheless soon came to an end when the supply of available trees began to dwindle. Needing to change tack, August next rented a room in the market building and opened up business as a market agent, buying and selling produce for a five percent

⁶³ W. Young, *German Diplomatic Relations 1871-1945: The Wilhelmstrasse And The Formulation of Foreign Policy*. 2006. p. 89.

⁶⁴ There were, nevertheless, other instances where German families and the descendants of the HMS missionaries living in the ZAR were not released from the concentration camps. In particular, the Germans living in the ZAR's Marico District seem to have been interned in concentration camps for the full duration and also experienced the malnutrition and fatalities that were typical of their fellow internees. (H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. pp. 25-26.)

⁶⁵ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 72-73.

⁶⁶ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 72-73.

commission. The business went well and he soon needed to employ an assistant to manage the growing volume of trade. With his venture flourishing and, thereby, no doubt making a name for himself, August Behrens was next approached by the office of the Pretoria Provost-Marshal asking him to take on the management of the town's dairy depot. It was a gruelling task that began in the early hours of the morning and ran till late into the night, but with its government salary and the profits of his market business combined he was thereafter able to take home up to thirty pounds a month.⁶⁷

While August Behrens was securing an income for his family, his wife Dora, gave birth to twin boys who were named Hermann and Fritz (Manny and Fiddy). It was an occasion that their elder brother, Gussy (August), then aged seven, recalled as part of his childhood memories of the family's time in Pretoria. For Gussy, along with his older brother Heiny (Heinrich) their move to the capital city had coincided with their need to begin their schooling.⁶⁸ This they received at Pretoria's German School that had only opened its doors a little more than a year before (thanks to the substantial donation of a German immigrant) and which lay situated on the other side of town.⁶⁹ Therefore, traversing the approximately four kilometre distance both to and from school on a daily basis, the brothers Heiny and Gussy befriended the other German children that lived along the way. Of these, the families Muhl and Kahl shared a house that also became the communal meeting place for the HMS community living in Pretoria at that time. Here, an impromptu congregation would gather on Sundays to share a Lutheran service while the children amused themselves by playing outside. Other amusements included visiting the elderly Missionary couple, Christian and Luise Müller who lived only a few houses away and who had a lovely swing strung from the tree in their yard.⁷⁰ And then there were the battles, which the boys fought along with others in the street against those so-called "Joiner children" whose fathers had joined the English forces in fighting against the remnants of the Boer commandos.⁷¹

⁶⁷ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 75.

⁶⁸ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 2-3.

⁶⁹ Deutsche Internationale Schule Pretoria. <<http://eng.dspretoria.co.za/home/die-geschichte-der-deutschen-schule-pretoria/>> Access: 26-4-2017.

⁷⁰ On one occasion, Gussy's four year old sister, Hilda, fell from the swing causing significant internal injuries from which she tragically died a short while thereafter.

⁷¹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 2-3.

The time in Pretoria for those German families sequestered there for the duration of the South African War was undoubtedly a period of significant concerns. Not only were the majority of their younger men either still at war, or languishing in camps as prisoners of war, but they had had to abandon their homes and possessions to an uncertain fate. In spite of this, the circumstances of German missionaries and their families who had been released from the concentration camps was far removed from those being experienced by the families of their Boer compatriots.⁷² For the HMS missionaries themselves, the sensitivity of their German nationality seems to have afforded them the relative luxury of not only being housed free of charge in Pretoria, but also being entitled to free rations on behalf of the British government. To this end, despite the sense of injustice that was undoubtedly felt by many of the HMS missionaries, some, including Kroondal's Missionary Müller, expressed surprisingly positive sentiments towards the British occupation as is seen in an extract from a letter (7 March 1901) to his relations in Germany:

*Wir leben hier so ziemlich auf Gouvernements Rechnung und können uns nicht beklagen. Mehl, Fleisch, Kaffee, Zucker und Salz bekommen wir zur Genüge; auch Steinkohlen, für die andern Bedürfnisse müssen wir selbst sorgen. Wir sind dem Gouvernement dankbar für das, was es für uns thut. Ach würde doch bald, bald Friede! Wenn England die Regierung behält, soll mirs ganz recht sein, die alte Dopperregierung wünsche ich nimmer zurück. Ich denke wir werden unter englischer Regierung auch gut leben können.*⁷³

We are living here, mostly at the expense of the (British) government and cannot complain. Flour, meat, coffee, sugar and salt are all provided to us in sufficient quantities; even coal - other items are up to us to acquire ourselves. We are grateful for all that the government is doing for us. Oh, if only peace would arrive soon! If England retains control over the government then it will completely fine by me. I do not wish the old "Dopper"⁷⁴ government back at all. I think we will also be able to live well under an English government.
(Own translation)

⁷² F. Pretorius, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*. 1998. pp. 300-306.

⁷³ R. Ottermann, (ed.), *Pastor Christian Müller (1836-1916) und Frau Luise Müller, geb. Ottermann (1844-1930) von Kroondal*. Stellenbosch, 1995. p. 34.

⁷⁴ The conservative party of the Dutch Reformed Church that broke away to form the Gereformeerde Dutch Reformed Church - among them the President of the ZAR, Paul Kruger.

These sentiments by the sixty four year old missionary depict the clear distinction that was made by the British in their treatment of the German Hermannsburg missionaries. Yet, if the fortunes of war had spared many of the region's German civilians from the worst of its ravages, then it held no relevance to the men who were fighting on the side of the Boers in the field. Of these, most were eventually captured with many having formed part of the die-hard "*Bittereinders*" (to the bitter end) whereupon they were sent to various prisoner of war camps as far afield as the island of St. Helena in the southern Atlantic and the British colony of Ceylon in the east. However, for two of these men, the events of the war would not be as kind, and Theodor Harms of Kroondal along with Missionary Müller's eldest son, Hermann, were both eventually counted amongst its fatalities.⁷⁵

Aftermath

It was with these mixed fortunes that Kroondal's inhabitants, along with those of the other Germans of that region, were finally able to welcome the arrival of peace that was signed in Vereeniging on 31 May, 1902.⁷⁶ With the clouds of war beginning to lift and the countryside once more opened to freedom of movement, the individual families began to make their way back to discover what remained of their homes. For many, it was a journey that was undertaken in the absence of their men who, as former combatants, remained languishing in captivity for many months before being made to sign an oath of neutrality that would allow them to journey home. In some cases, such as those of the new Kroondal (and former *Hermannskraal*) resident, Ernst Muhl, they were only able to be reunited with their families more than a year after the actual peace had been signed.⁷⁷ Therefore, arriving back in Kroondal the German families were met with a disheartening sight of destruction. Everywhere, homes had been looted and often entirely destroyed. Those that were left standing had been used to stable horses or garrison British troops who had since left them in a shambles. In every instance, all furniture and other materials and valuables, including farming implements, had been carted off or burnt on the spot. In the fields and vegetable gardens, the weeds grew tall and fruit trees had been cut down for firewood. Only the church, that had been finished in 1896, stood relatively unscathed while the nearby school building had been left in ruins.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ T. Wenhold, "Die Geschichte Kroondals". *Afrikanischer Heimatkalender*. 1970. p. 99; R. Ottermann, (ed.), *Pastor Christian Müller (1836-1916) und Frau Luise Müller, geb. Ottermann (1844-1930) von Kroondal*. Stellenbosch, 1995. pp. 40-42.

⁷⁶ T. Wenhold, "Die Geschichte Kroondals". *Afrikanischer Heimatkalender*. 1970. p. 99.

⁷⁷ H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. pp. 23-25.

⁷⁸ T. Wenhold, "Die Geschichte Kroondals". *Afrikanischer Heimatkalender*. 1970. pp. 99-100.

Included amongst those returning to Kroondal was the Missionary Christian Müller and his wife Luise who upon arriving at their home, found it occupied by members of their former Black congregation. These were certainly not happy to see the missionary return and only vacated the house with some reluctance.⁷⁹ This proved to be the case for many of the other German families in Kroondal who, upon closer inspection of the surrounding area, soon discovered that many of their household items were now in the homes of their former employees who were likewise reluctant to have to return them. As such, it seems that the Black inhabitants of Kroondal were quite dismayed at the return of the White community for whom they were, understandably, unwilling to have to return to work for.⁸⁰ Taken collectively, they were sentiments that appear to have been widespread amongst the Black communities of the Western Transvaal who, after decades of harsh treatment and frequent exploitation by the ZAR's farmers, rejoiced at what they regarded as their liberation by the occupying British forces.⁸¹ With the coming of peace and the British government's efforts to reconcile with the deeply embittered Afrikaner population, the policy of reconstruction favoured the return of land and property to the white farmers at the expense of their former Black tenants. These were, therefore, also understandably embittered to have to return to the status quo ante given that many of their number, and those of the Kgatla in particular, had actively aided the British during the war.

For their part, the returning White communities felt equally dismayed at the open displays of resistance with which they were met by their former employees, and it would be accurate to suggest that the events of the South African War and its aftermath proved to be an important milestone in the entrenchment of racial animosity between both parties. It is, therefore, quite feasible to apply this same conclusion to the Black and White communities of Kroondal who, as evidence suggests, mirrored the attitudes that were prevalent throughout the region. This was only too evident when reading the letters of the returning Missionary, Christian Müller, in which he described the circumstances of his return to Kroondal towards the end of 1902:

⁷⁹ R. Ottermann, (ed.), *Pastor Christian Müller (1836-1916) und Frau Luise Müller, geb. Ottermann (1844-1930) von Kroondal*. Stellenbosch, 1995. p. 43.

⁸⁰ H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. pp. 23-25.

⁸¹ P. Warwick, *Black People and the South African War, 1899-1902*. 1983. p. 165.

(12 August 1902)

...Unser Kaffern hätten am liebsten gesehen, daß wir nicht wieder zurückgekommen wären. Trotzdem ich es ihn ihnen wiederholt hatte wissen lassen: ich komme bald zurück, macht doch mein Haus etwas zurecht daß ich wieder einziehen kann! Keiner hatte eine Hand gerührt, es zu reinigen, weder innen noch außen. Nicht sah es außen und innen aus als ob Menschen darin gewohnt hätten, sonder als ob Schweine drin und darumher gehaust hatten. Warlich bei solchen Erfahrungen muß man wachen und beten, daß man noch Muth und Freudigkeit behält den Leuten weiter zu predigen und sie weiter zu lehren, daß man sich nicht erbittern läßt.⁸²

...Our Blacks would have preferred that we had never returned. Despite the fact that I repeatedly let them know: I will be coming back soon, bring my home into order so that I can move back in! Nobody had lifted a hand to clean it, both inside and out. It did not look as though people had been living there, whether on the inside or the outside, but rather as though pigs had been living in it and around it. Truly, with such an experience one has to be watchful and pray that one will be able to retain the determination and joy to continue preaching to these people and teaching them, and to ensure that one does not become embittered.

(Own translation)

(7 December 1902)

Der Krieg hat manches in unsern Gemeinden offenbar gemacht, was wir vorher kaum für möglich gehalten hätten. Manche unserer Gemeindeglieder haben gewünscht, daß wir nie wieder zurückkehren möchten, ihres unchristlichen heidnischen Lebens wegen, während unsere Abwesenheit. Manche hassen ihre alten Lehrer, weil wir ihr heidnisches Leben und Thun aufdecken und strafen...Die Kaffern fühlen sich unter engl. Herrschaft als die Herrn des Landes. Ich hoffe aber daß die Engländer den Hochmuth der Kaffern schon zu dämpfen wissen werden.⁸³

⁸² R. Ottermann, (ed.), *Pastor Christian Müller (1836-1916) und Frau Luise Müller, geb. Ottermann (1844-1930) von Kroondal*. Stellenbosch, 1995. p. 43.

⁸³ R. Ottermann, (ed.), *Pastor Christian Müller (1836-1916) und Frau Luise Müller, geb. Ottermann (1844-1930) von Kroondal*. Stellenbosch, 1995. pp. 44-45.

The war has made somethings come to light within our congregations that we would previously not have believed possible. Some of our congregation had wished that we would never have returned, preferring their unchristian and heathen lives in our absence. Some hate their old teachers because we lay bare their heathen lives and deeds and punish them...The Blacks feel that they are the lords of the land under British governance. But I am hopeful that the English will know to dampen their confidence.

(Own translation)

The uncomfortable realisation by many of the HMS missionaries, that the generally successful nature of their work in the former ZAR had probably largely been due to the oppressive framework of Boer rule, seems to have come as something of a shock. From these accounts it is feasible to suggest that the arrival of the HMS missionaries had probably only represented a useful means for many of these Black communities to equip themselves against some of the worst depredations of White rule in the area. Once removed from this oppression, the clear preference by many of these Black populations to cast off the influences of European authority and inculturation is a telling indication of those circumstances that had probably influenced the nature of their conversion in the first place. In this respect, it is also interesting to note that the attitudes of HMS missionaries such as those of Missionary Müller, now began to mirror those of the HMS missionaries who had been working in the Zulu Kingdom before its subjugation in 1879.⁸⁴ In both instances, the failure of many missionaries to effect any significant influence over autonomous Black African communities seems to have resulted in their swift condonation of white colonial subjugation.

That this resistance to the return of the White rural communities in the Transvaal was not without its exceptions is perhaps well evidenced by the HMS community of *Bethanie*, to which August Behrens and his cousin, Missionary Wilhelm Behrens (junior) returned in 1902. Here the resident chief of the Bakwena ba Mogopa, (Jacob) Mmamogale, presented August Behrens with the *Bethanie* shop's books and records that he had carefully collected along with all other items that had been left after the British had departed the mission station. For his part, August Behrens makes a particular reference to the gratitude that he and his family felt towards

⁸⁴ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 60-61, 63.

Mmamogale for the kindness that he displayed towards them on their return.⁸⁵ In this instance it is well worth speculating that the initial collaboration between Missionary Behrens and the Bakwena ba Mogopa in securing the repurchase of their own land had developed a sense of mutual trust and respect between them. Accordingly, it is probably precisely because of the fact that the Bakwena ba Mogopa of Mantabole were no longer entirely beholden to the resident missionary, but able to exert a significant degree of autonomy over their lives and land, that this relationship had been possible.

Despite the amicable nature of his return to *Bethanie*, August Behrens's departure from Pretoria was one that he undertook with mixed emotions. While the war had undoubtedly brought about significant hardship for his family, including the loss of his home and the entire inventory of his *Bethanie* shop, the time in Pretoria had, as indicated, been anything but wasted. Using his resourcefulness as a businessman, August Behrens's career had flourished in the capital to such a degree that he at first seriously considered remaining there to pursue the continued success of his ventures. However, seemingly valuing the close-knit nature of the same German community in which he had retained an active role over the almost four decades of his life and across two continents, he undertook to return to *Bethanie* and rebuild his life there.⁸⁶ It was an important decision that, when seen within the context of his flourishing business and the assurance that his children would be able to retain easy access to German schooling in Pretoria, makes his decision significant indeed. In this sense, it is quite probable that August Behrens made an important distinction between the nature of his own German (Hermannsburg) identity and that which would have been on offer in the more delocalised and cosmopolitan German community of Pretoria. Either way, the decision to return brought with it numerous hardships that would have to be faced in order to ensure that his family of four children would receive adequate schooling in an environment that had been thoroughly devastated by the war.

It was these hopes for both religious and cultural community with his compatriots and the educational requirements of his family, that prompted August Behrens to return to *Bethanie* and align himself with the community of Kroondal. It was a decision that was likewise eventually made by many others of the surrounding German population

⁸⁵ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 76.

⁸⁶ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 75-76.

who in the years that followed, gradually began to orientate themselves towards Kroondal as the central point of German culture in the region.⁸⁷ However, while Kroondal would eventually become the focal point of German identity in the Transvaal, the first years following the war seemed to hold little in the way of such promise. Of its returning farmers, most were effectively penniless and for those who had spent time as prisoners of war, also often weakened by disease and the protracted difficulty of their wartime experience.⁸⁸ One by one, the families were reunited and through their mutual assistance, attempted to reestablish their lives on their farms. This would prove to be an arduous task for many among the community who had to take on substantial loans in order to re-float their operations and rebuild their homes. Then, no sooner had they made their first attempts when a renewed outbreak of the Rinderpest epidemic swept through the region in 1904, claiming the oxen that they so badly needed to plough their fields. It was at some point during these extraordinarily trying years that a later chronicler of the community's history records that many of the Kroondalers considered whether they should join the immigration of embittered Afrikaners to Argentina. In the end, such plans were abandoned and with further loans taken from the bank, the community continued their slow and painful recovery.⁸⁹

The Kroondal School Association

When considering the compounded hardships that were encountered by the community of Kroondal in the first years after the South African War, it is notable that barely two years after their return to the settlement the community had already laid the foundations of a new school.⁹⁰ In order to cover these costs the newly formed *Deutscher Schulverein Kroondal* (German School Association of Kroondal), that was convened at a meeting on the HMS mission station of *Kana* in 1903, wasted no time in beginning to canvas funds with which to finance its construction along with that of a school hostel (*Schülerheim*). These were forthcoming from amongst others, the German consulate in Pretoria who had approached the German colonial office in the person of Friedrich von Lindequest, the soon to be governor of German South West Africa.⁹¹ In turn, von Lindequest, approached the *Herzog* (Duke), John Albert of

⁸⁷ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 80-81.

⁸⁸ H. & I. Behrens & H. H. Stäcker, *Festschrift 100 Jahre Muhls in Südafrika*. 1983. p. 25.

⁸⁹ J. v. Zwierring, *Gemeindechronik 1895-1966*. (Kroondal Church Archive). 1966. pp. 5-6.

⁹⁰ The old Morgensonne missionary school having been destroyed in the war - (H. Pape, *'Morgensonne' 1876-1976*. 1976. p. 11.)

⁹¹ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. p. 5; D. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad*. 2002. p. 64.

Mecklenburg who had been a founding member of the Pan-German League or *Alldeutscher Verband* (ADV) and the then president of the German Colonial Society or DKG (*Deutscher Kolonialgesellschaft*).⁹² Taken together, these individuals managed to secure a sum of one hundred and thirty nine pounds along with a further fifty pounds from the German national school fund with which to contribute to the project. For its part, members of the Kroondal community were each required to make either a once off contribution of fifty pounds or pay an annual sum of five pounds over fifteen years. Thus, with the necessary funds acquired, the inauguration of the new school hostel's foundations could be celebrated on 4 August, 1904, with the German consul in attendance.⁹³

The rapid consolidation of its post-war community and particularly that of its schooling, represents an important factor in the development of Kroondal's society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Not only is it evident that the community clearly valued the importance of providing education for its children, but the fact that it was determined that this should remain expressly German in its character is notable indeed. This was underpinned by the fact that during the same period the *Kroondaler Schulverein* politely refused the offer by the Transvaal's new British administration both to rebuild and sustain the community's school should these be allowed to form part of the new anglocentric education department.⁹⁴ Instead, the Kroondal community embarked upon its own educational initiative that crucially managed to tap into the rise of national sentiment in Germany. It was an initiative that in this respect, can be regarded as a defining milestone in Kroondal's history and something of a turning point in the development of its identity.⁹⁵ Where the years that led up to the South African War had seen an increasing sense of patriotism towards the Boer Republic, especially from the second generation of HMS immigrants who had been born into its society, the collapse of the Boer state and its replacement by British hegemony had created something of a void in the mind of its community. At the same time, the rise of European, but most especially German, nationalism had begun to come of age as the new German state embraced the means with which to extend its influence throughout the world. It was a world in which the *Weltpolitik* of its *Kaiser*, Wilhlem II, sought to draw upon the extensive exodus that had taken place from among the German populations prior to its

⁹² H. Winkler, *Germany: The Long Road West: Volume 1: 1789-1933*. 2000.

⁹³ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. pp. 5-6.

⁹⁴ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. Krugersdorp, 1979. p. 5.

⁹⁵ H. Pape, *75 Jahre Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896-1971*. 1971. p. 5.

unification and in which the idea of a new, unified German nationalism had become an idealised priority.⁹⁶ It was from this growing movement that the notion of an overarching sense of Germanness or *Deutschtum* began to make itself heard both in Germany and abroad, and in which the expatriate communities of its former citizens were likewise imagined as an important extension of Germany's new internationalism.⁹⁷

For Germany's population that had experienced the inordinately rapid increase of its own industrialisation and with it, the growth of a new, largely urban German middle class, the steady replacement of its previously and predominantly rural identity with that of an industrialised nation state had had an equally important effect upon its psyche. It was a change that, in turn, had also fuelled the growing idealisation of its own pre-industrial past from which it felt increasingly estranged following the headlong drive of its own modernisation. Responding to this loss and in part, driven by the fascination of its colonial ventures, the German *Mittelstand* (middle class) fostered a generally idealised perspective of the German communities abroad. These were considered to be a throwback to a time in Germany's past that had managed to "preserve a preindustrial, agrarian vision of German society".⁹⁸ Together they had given rise to a number of "patriotic societies" such as those of the DKG and the ADV, whose goals were to act as the "custodians of German culture" both in Germany and abroad.⁹⁹ It was in attempting to realise these goals that members of the ADV and DKG had begun to involve themselves in various philanthropic ideals that aimed to support the continuity of German communities beyond the borders of the German state.¹⁰⁰

With the building of its school in the first years after the South African War, the second generation of German (Hermannsburg) immigrants in the Transvaal began the twentieth century with a crucial distinction from that of their forebears in that it had actively sought and received funding for its new school from the German government and not the HMS. While this certainly did not preclude the prominent influence that the HMS would continue to have upon both the identity and ethos of the Kroondal settlement, it does mark the beginning of an important realignment

⁹⁶ W. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire*. 1978. pp. 175-176.

⁹⁷ D. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad*. 2002. pp. 2, 11.

⁹⁸ D. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad*. 2002. pp. 2, 10-11.

⁹⁹ D. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad*. 2002. p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ D. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad*. 2002. p. 11.

towards the growing influence of German nationalism.¹⁰¹ For its part, the HMS did provide one very important contribution in the person of a newly arrived Missionary, Johannes von Zwierring, who it allowed to be seconded to the *Kroondaler Schulverein* as an assistant teacher and hostel father in 1905.¹⁰² However, despite the central role that von Zwierring would go on to play in the development of generations of Kroondal's community, the official distinction between the Kroondal church and the *Kroondaler Schulverein*, nevertheless, presented a departure from the religious oversight that had been the hallmark of the German *Morgensonne* school that had come before it.

Among those who were recorded as making a particularly substantial contribution to the building of the new Kroondal school was August Behrens who, despite continuing to be based at the *Bethanie* mission station, made it clear that he saw the future of his family amongst the Kroondal community.¹⁰³ Yet, while the Behrens family had been able to emerge from the war with the benefits of what had been a thriving business in Pretoria, the years had not passed without exacting their own price on the then thirty nine year old August. Having developed a bad cough and suffering from chronic pain in his hip and back, August Behrens had received the surprising and thoroughly distressing diagnosis from a local doctor that his condition was almost certainly terminal. Encouraged by a resident missionary of the Berlin Missionary Society not to give up hope, he embarked upon a treatment of homeopathy that soon seemed to cure the cough but could not alleviate the persistent malaise that other local physicians agreed seemed to indicate the presence of an acute kidney disease. Fearing the worst and determined to seek the best treatment possible August Behrens decided to embark upon a return journey to Germany where he hoped to be able to consult the best of its medical establishment. To finance this trip he sold one of his farms and leaving his family in the care of various relatives, he and his wife Dora took the train to Cape Town where they boarded the British steam ship, *Carisbrook Castle*.¹⁰⁴

At the time that August Behrens was embarking upon his voyage in the hope of restoring his health abroad, another of the region's Germans, the Missionary Ernst Wehrmann of *Manuane*, was just returning from a similar excursion that he had

¹⁰¹ H. Pape, *75 Jahre Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896-1971*. 1971. p. 5.

¹⁰² H. Pape, *Hermannsbürger Missionare in Südafrika*. 1986. p. 218.

¹⁰³ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 80-81.

¹⁰⁴ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 78.

likewise hoped would cure him of his own ailment. Suffering from repeated bouts of malaria, the missionary's vocal chords were attacked by the complications of the disease, leaving him with little more than a whisper in his voice. However, unlike August Behrens, who had been able to finance his own journey back to Germany in search of treatment, the ageing missionary could only afford a trip to the Natal south coast where the "change of air", it was thought, might provide some relief for his condition.¹⁰⁵ Accompanying him were his wife, Marie and his eight year old daughter, Ida who was similarly convalescing from a bout of whooping cough that had afflicted her in the wake of the malaria that she had experienced during the war. While the trip was said to have done the young Ida a great deal of good, it failed to have the hoped for effect upon the old missionary.¹⁰⁶ It was, thus, on his return to *Manuane* in 1903 that the seventy year old Missionary Wehrmann was released from service to the HMS that, therefore, also required that he and his family should vacate the station that had been their home for more than twenty years.¹⁰⁷ It followed that after loading their possessions onto a number of wagons, the Wehrmann family set off east while accompanied by a crowd of congregants who were said to have accompanied the family on their journey for days before eventually turning around. Even then, a number of congregants, mostly orphans, apparently made the trip in its entirety in order to settle with them in their new home.¹⁰⁸ Their destination, as with so many other Germans in the region at the time, was the settlement of Kroondal. Here Missionary Wehrmann had bought a farm some six kilometres from its settlement and appropriately named it *Wehrmannsruh* - Wehrmann's Rest.

With the arrival of families such as those of the Behrens's and Wehrmanns, the rebuilding of Kroondal began to gather steam. At its heart, the Lutheran church and the soon to be completed German school represented the centre point of its existence in which the isolation of the previous generation could be consolidated into the more distinctive cultural entity of an expressly German community. Crucially, for those families that orientated themselves towards Kroondal in this post-war period, their most pronounced need was usually to be able to ensure a German education for their children. It was amongst these that the two Behrens boys, Heiny (aged twelve) and Gussy (aged nine) joined the settlement's children that included the eight year old Ida Wehrmann attending the school. This had already commenced its

¹⁰⁵ H. Behrens & H. Wehrmann (ed), *Wehrmannstreffen*. 1983. p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ H. Behrens, "Gomutti". 1975. p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ H. Behrens & H. Wehrmann (ed), *Wehrmannstreffen*. 1983. p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ (Anonymous), *Eduard und Marie Penzhorn: 100 Jahre*. 1982. pp. 38-39.

classes prior to the completion of the new buildings and alternatively took place in the church and some of the settlement's homes. The accommodation in Kroondal for the two Behrens brothers was provided by the family of their uncle, Theodor Wenhold, who, still in the process of rebuilding their own home, were likewise quartered in the small outhouse of their neighbours, the Backeberg family. These also took on numerous other children from outlying families so that the Backeberg yard initially resembled a teeming mass of new scholars.

Taking charge of the new school was the teacher and former *Morgensonne* scholar, Eduard Penzhorn, who had himself only recently returned from his time as both combatant¹⁰⁹ and a prisoner-of-war during the recent conflict.¹¹⁰ Teaching subjects that included English, Dutch, Geography, Mathematics and Penmanship, the twenty three year old teacher was assisted by the newly arrived twenty eight year old HMS Missionary, Johannes von Zwiétring. For his part, von Zwiétring took on the subjects of German, History, Biblical History and Religion.¹¹¹ Then, following the completion of the *Schülerheim* (school hostel) in 1905, von Zwiétring and his wife also took on the position of hostel parents to those children who needed to board there during the school term.¹¹²

Judging from the accounts of their former pupils, the two men established a good rapport with one another, even if their methods were said to have been markedly different. Where Eduard Penzhorn was known for his ability both to inspire and control his students without the need for corporal punishment, Missionary von Zwiétring ruled over his young charges with a sense of rigid discipline that certainly did not shy away from the use of a rod.¹¹³ In this sense, the two men, in some respects, seem to have been representative of two different worlds. While Eduard Penzhorn had been born into the more pragmatic circumstances of the African environment, his counterpart, von Zwiétring, had stemmed from Prussian origins in Germany where, after serving two years in the German army, he had completed his training as a missionary at the end of 1902.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Eduard Penzhorn was the eventual adjutant to General Jan Kemp.

¹¹⁰ (Anonymous), *Eduard und Marie Penzhorn: 100 Jahre*. 1982. p. 18.

¹¹¹ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. Krugersdorp, 1979. p. 9; Unknown author, *Eduard und Marie Penzhorn: 100 Jahre*. 1982. p. 18.

¹¹² T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. p. 7.

¹¹³ (Anonymous), *Eduard und Marie Penzhorn: 100 Jahre*. 1982. p. 18; T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. p. 7.

¹¹⁴ H. Pape, *Hermannsburger Missionare in Südafrika*. 1986. p. 218.

For the new inhabitants of the Kroondal *Schülerheim*, this regimented nature of their new hostel master's background must have seemed only too obvious as they became acquainted with life under his and his wife's supervision. For his part, Gussy Behrens recounts that from the outset, "Onkel" (uncle) von Zwieling set out to enforce an "almost unimaginable degree of strictness and order". (*es herrschte gleich von Anfang an eine, fast unvorstellbare Strenge und Ordnung*).¹¹⁵ This included daily inspections to ensure that all beds were properly made and that bodily cleanliness, including those of fingernails, was being observed. Table manners were strictly enforced and much of the afternoon was assigned to work upon the fields, vegetable garden and piggery that were to be established to supplement the hostel's kitchen. In the evening a devotion was held together with the singing of hymns before the children were sent off to bed. All the while, the chores of cooking, washing and cleaning, all without the use of electricity or running water, demanded a virtually unrelenting degree of attention.¹¹⁶

As Gussy and Heiny Behrens were becoming acquainted with the regimen of life in the Kroondal school hostel, their father and mother were newly returned from their eight month long journey to Germany. For August Behrens, the trip had been a successful venture after a urologist had determined that it had not been his kidneys, but rather the recurrent afflictions of malaria that had created his lingering sense of malaise. His condition seems to have been eased by treatments at various hot-springs before the couple embarked upon a tour that included a stop in Hermannsburg to see August's childhood home and to visit old friends and relations.¹¹⁷ While August's writings do not say it in so many words, it seems clear that his return to his origins in Germany were accompanied by a sense of pride in the accomplishments that had seen him better his position in life. Not only had he established himself as the owner of various farms, but his ventures as a businessman had lifted him to an economic standing that stood above most of his peers and certainly far above that which he might have achieved had he remained in Hermannsburg. On the other hand, one can only imagine what the journey to Europe must have been like for August's wife, Dora, who as the daughter of an HMS missionary had had no previous experience of what life might look like beyond that which she had come to know in Africa. In both instances it would, however, be fair to

¹¹⁵ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 6.

¹¹⁶ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. pp. 7, 37-38.

¹¹⁷ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. pp. 78-79.

say that the journey back, together with all its cultural references, would have made a marked impression upon both husband and wife.

With life and business gradually returning to normal after the war, the impression of Kroondal and families such as those of August Behrens, is one of a community that was eager to pursue the reconstruction of their lives and the general welfare of its inhabitants. For August Behrens, this meant re-establishing his shop at the *Bethanie* mission station along with a new residence on its property with the agreement that the house would be transferred to the HMS after a period of twenty years. Trading on the success of his business at *Bethanie*, Behrens next opened two satellite shops at the HMS mission stations of *Berseba* and *Makalokwe* that likewise seemed to benefit from reasonable trade.¹¹⁸ It was during this same period that the farmers of Kroondal were similarly trying to re-establish themselves in the region's economy - a difficult task in the trying conditions after the war. In particular, popular crops such as tobacco were held subject to low returns by the companies and distributors in the towns with whom the individual farmers were often powerless to negotiate. In response, four of the Kroondal farmers founded the "Magaliesberg Farmers Association" in September 1904 that sought to achieve a better bargaining price for its eventual seventeen members. Although the association was soon placed into liquidation following the abscondment of its Johannesburg agent, it paved the way for what by 1909 became the "*Magaliesbergse Koöperatiewe Tabakplantersvereniging*" (Magaliesberg Tobacco-planters Cooperative) under the directorship of Kroondal's Georg Ottermann.¹¹⁹

With his expanding network of trading and with the Kroondal farmers emerging back onto their feet, August Behrens's next venture was to purchase one of the Kroondal settlement's two little trading stores that had been established there after the war. The first, belonging to a certain Mr Somers, had been conducted out of a rented room in the Backeberg house which August Behrens took over in 1906. Then, only two years later he bought the corrugated iron structure that had served as the shop of Rattenberg and Cohen from Rustenburg, but which now became the "*Kroondaler Laden*" (Kroondal general dealer) after the two shops had been combined. Set in the shade of an enormous syringa tree and only a short walk from the Kroondal

¹¹⁸ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 80.

¹¹⁹ R. Ottermann, *Festschrift Otterman*. Stellenbosch, 1993. pp. 36-38.

Schülerheim, the shop's new ownership was celebrated in 1908.¹²⁰ Sneaking out of hostel to attend the festivities, Gussy Behrens recalls the event along with the fact that his father soon discovered his indiscretion which was duly rewarded with a thorough beating by *Onkel* von Zwierring the following day.¹²¹ Seen together, and despite the obvious hardships of its new beginning, the years of resettlement in Kroondal undoubtedly brought with it the flowering of its community. While no statistics of the community's exact numbers seem to be available before 1916,¹²² a photograph of congregants and missionaries in front of the Kroondal church in 1904 suggests that there were approximately one hundred adults and forty children in attendance on that day. Also clearly evident in the same photograph was the Imperial German *Schwarz-Weiss-Rot* (Black-White-Red) flag proudly held up at the centre of the group.¹²³

Despite the obviously nationalistic sentiments that the Kroondal community held towards the German nation state at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as the sense of duty and local patriotism that bade them to fight as citizens of the ZAR, the initial bitterness after the war was seemingly soon replaced by the focus on the road that lay ahead. In doing so, its sense of civic duty seemed to reconcile itself quite quickly to life under British governance as was evidenced at the inauguration of the Kroondal *Schülerheim* in 1905 where members of the surrounding English, Dutch (Afrikaner) and German communities were all well represented. At this occasion, the organisers were careful to ensure that the welcoming speeches were made in all three languages¹²⁴ and when one of the guests of honour, the English magistrate of Rustenburg, Mr Ormond, praised the Kroondal community as "good citizens of the land", the satisfaction of the assembled German congregation could not have been higher (*Zur Freude aller anwesenden Deutschen stellte er die Bewohner als gute Bürger des Landes dar.../ To the joy of all those Germans assembled, he (Ormond) acknowledged the inhabitants as good citizens of the country*)¹²⁵. Yet at the same time, if the Germans of Kroondal had striven to be regarded as good citizens and now, good subjects of their adopted land, it seems clear that the fundamental notion

¹²⁰ H. Behrens & I. Behrens. *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zum Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989*. 1989. p. 58

¹²¹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 7.

¹²² Kroondal Archive, *Kroondaler Statistischer Berichte*. 1916-2005. p. 1; E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. 1996. p. 12.

¹²³ E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. 1996. p. 38.

¹²⁴ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. p. 6.

¹²⁵ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. Krugersdorp, 1979. p. 6.

of their own nationality would remain focused upon their identity as Germans. To this end, despite the efforts to foster a sense of magnanimity towards the British government and the incorporation of English among those subjects to be taught in its school, the popularity of the English language amongst that generation of its children could not have been lower. Therefore, even while its school teacher, Ernst Penzhorn, embarked upon a year-long sabbatical to further his educational training in both England and Germany,¹²⁶ many of his students such as Gussy Behrens, remarked that they generally hated the subject of English altogether.¹²⁷

After close to seven years spent in the Kroondal school and shortly after his fifteenth birthday, Gussy Behrens was confirmed as a member of the Lutheran Church in June 1909, along with a number of his classmates of a similar age.¹²⁸ Among these was the fourteen year old Ida Wehrmann. She and Gussy Behrens were entered into the Kroondal congregation's role of confirmed members (*Verzeichneten der Konfirmierten*) as numbers fifty one and forty seven accordingly.¹²⁹ With this milestone achieved, and with money generally hard to come by, most of Kroondal's children finished their schooling at this age. This was certainly the case for Ida Wehrmann whose aged father had few means with which to provide ongoing support for his many children. Accordingly, she returned home and thereupon soon set out to earn an income among the network of German friends and acquaintances as a seamstress.¹³⁰ For his part, Gussy Behrens returned to his father's home at *Bethanie* where after a few months of assisting him in the shop, his father determined that he and his brother should further their education at a new secondary school that had just been opened in Pretoria.¹³¹

The story of Ida Wehrmann and Gussy Behrens that is to be taken up in the next chapter of this thesis, is one that traces the development of what by 1910 became the Union of South Africa. It was a development that brought with it the rising spectre of nationalism that would become one of the defining aspects of the Kroondal community as it established itself in the troubled decades of the first half of the twentieth century. However, for the first generation of surviving HMS missionaries

¹²⁶ (Anonymous), *Eduard und Marie Penzhorn: 100 Jahre*. 1982. p. 9.

¹²⁷ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 7.; H. Behrens, *Gomutti*. 1975. p. 2.

¹²⁸ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 10.

¹²⁹ Kroondal Archive, "Verzeichnis der Konfirmierten". pp. 7-8.

¹³⁰ H. Behrens, "Gomutti". 1975. p. 2.

¹³¹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 10.

and immigrants, these changes would largely also coincide with the end of their lives in which the focus of their community would begin to be shifted to the generation of their descendants. For an immigrant such as August Behrens, his own journey to Africa fell into a period that effectively straddled both the first and second generations of the HMS and, therefore, also allowed him to be able to witness many of the developments that were to come. As for the decades that had passed, the events of August's life and experiences that followed his immigration to Africa offer an important insight into the tremendous influence that the HMS had had in fostering the growth of German communities throughout the region. While he himself had never directly entered into its service, the extensive network of the HMS's community had facilitated virtually every aspect of both his immigration and successful foundation as a farmer and businessman. Beginning with his departure from Hermannsburg in 1880, the otherwise substantial barriers not only of language but also of all the necessary logistics for his journey had already been overcome by the HMS missionaries and colonists who had pioneered and established its route. This to the extent that his arrival in Africa could immediately benefit from a broadening network of relations who were able to provide a crucial psychological and financial safety net to the young immigrant. From these beginnings, his work for the Missionary Fuls and the ability to return the bulk of his income to his struggling mother in Germany were likewise facilitated by the HMS's organisation. Similarly it is important to recognise that his care during periods of ill health, the financial opportunity to begin as a semi-independent farmer and the subsequent immigration of his mother and brother, were all accomplished due to the HMS's connections. Indeed, his marriage to the daughter of the HMS Missionary Hermann Wenhold and his thriving business at the HMS mission station of *Bethanie*, along with his opportune release from the Irene concentration camp were all accomplished in no small part due to this same connection. Taken together, the life experience of August Behrens offers a compelling illustration of the tremendous impact that the vision and operation of the HMS's goals in Africa had upon facilitating the immigration of Germans to the South African region. It is, therefore, with this background in mind that this thesis examines the resilience that the communities of HMS descendants displayed in the twentieth century in order to maintain the culturally distinctive community that had been begun by their forebears.

Chapter 4 *Deutschum - Germanness* 1910-1918

In the immediate years following the end of the South African War, the new British administration of the Transvaal felt it necessary to consolidate its position by pursuing, as indicated, a policy of anglicisation in its new colony. In doing so, it not only hoped to draw the defeated Boers into an English sphere of influence, but ultimately, to alter the demographics of its region by encouraging British resettlement into the former South African Republic. While the hoped-for influx of British nationals into the Transvaal failed to materialise - in any substantial quantities - the drive to create a new system of government sponsored English education was implemented with some vigour. Working towards this end, the British administration, under Lord Alfred Milner, relegated the use of the Dutch language in all government schools while making each student's proficiency in English the primary requirement in their progression of each standard.¹ It was the same policy that the founders of the *Kroondaler Schulverein* (Kroondal School Association) had refused in 1903 in favour of retaining the specifically German identity of its school.² And, it was in a similar vein that the Dutch speaking community of the Transvaal vehemently opposed these measures by creating an initiative that promoted the creation of a new network of specifically Dutch medium private schools.³

The movement known as the *Christelik Nasionaal Onderwys* or Christian National Education (CNO) that was thus brought into being, soon began to flourish with the benefit of significant financial support from the Netherlands. Focused on providing an alternative, Dutch (Calvinist) centred education, its popularity resulted in over two hundred private schools being formed within a few years of its establishment. Among the largest of these was the Eendracht School in Pretoria that had been founded in 1904 in conjunction with the Dutch Reformed Church. In contrast, the British initiative for a new, English medium school in Pretoria had been drawn up by the end of 1907, with construction of what was to become the Pretoria College beginning in 1908.⁴ However, it was in this same period of the Transvaal's divergent education policies that the political landscape of the region had already begun to shift.⁵ Beginning with

¹ J. Illsley, *Pretoria Boys High. The Story of a South African School 1901-2001*. 2000. p. 26.

² T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. Krugersdorp, 1979. p. 5.

³ A. Bot, *The Development of Education in the Transvaal 1836 - 1951*. South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR). 2013. pp. 69, 71, 73.

⁴ J. Illsley, *Pretoria Boys High. The Story of a South African School 1901-2001*. 2000. pp. 26-27.

⁵ A. Bot, *The Development of Education in the Transvaal 1836 - 1951*. South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR). 2013. p. 75.

the granting of responsible (self) government for the Transvaal in 1907 and the resounding victory of the *Het Volk* party of the former Boer generals Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, the possibility of unifying Britain's four South African colonies came to the fore.⁶ It was a process that was begun in October 1908 so that by May the following year, the four colonies had reached sufficient consensus to put their proposal to the British parliament. The result was that in September 1909, the South Africa Act was passed into law and with it the provision that the Union of South Africa would be formed on the 31 May, 1910.⁷ Mirroring these developments and under the leadership of Smuts as the Transvaal's minister of Education, the desire for a similarly unified education policy initiated the merger of the Pretoria College and the Dutch medium Eendracht School. These were duly brought together by the beginning of 1910 and moved into the newly constructed premises of the Pretoria College which was then renamed the Pretoria Boys' High School.⁸

It was in the midst of these developments that August Behrens had decided that his sons should receive a secondary education (that the Kroondal school was not able to cater to) and to send them to the Eendracht School in Pretoria. Following in the footsteps of his older brother, Heiny, who had already attended the school ahead of him, Gussy Behrens arrived at Eendracht in 1910 to begin a further two years of secondary education. While this new beginning coincided with the merger of Eendracht and the Pretoria College, it is interesting to note that Gussy Behrens was not amongst those boys who moved across to the new and imposing premises that had been built on a rise overlooking the town. Instead, remaining at the original Eendracht school, Gussy Behrens joined a number of other German boys at the school's hostel where their room was dubbed the "German Box" by their fellow pupils.⁹ Whether or not this had been a purposeful decision by their father remains a mystery, but it seems feasible enough to assume that it would probably have been the case. Either way, it is also interesting to note that Gussy Behrens makes no reference to the occasion that brought about the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910, that would have occurred only five months into his time at Eendracht. Instead, like many other schoolboys before and since, those few references that are recorded, mention the holidays that he spent with a German classmate in Pella (west

⁶ H. Hewison, *Hedge of Wild Almonds: South Africa, the Pro-Boers & the Quaker Conscience*. 1989. p. 291.

⁷ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 18-79, 83.

⁸ J. Illsley, *Pretoria Boys High. The Story of a South African School 1901-2001*. 2000. pp. 26-28.

⁹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 10.

of Rustenburg) and that the completion of the Rustenburg - Pretoria railway line meant that he could travel home on his school holidays using the train. Other than this, Gussy Behrens also notes that the schooling he had received at Kroondal had been of a mixed standard. In the subjects of German, History and Arithmetic he was quite competent, but in English, Dutch, Geometry and Algebra he was well behind his other classmates. Not being a particularly enthusiastic student, Gussy nevertheless completed two and a half years at the Eendracht School that therefore earned him his standard six and seven.¹⁰

In comparison to the two Behrens brothers, whose father could afford to provide them with these further years of education, the circumstances of most of the other children in Kroondal required them to begin some form of work as soon as they had completed their primary schooling.¹¹ For a fourteen year old girl such as Ida Wehrmann, her father's retirement from the HMS along with the cumulative expenses of their large family, meant that it became necessary for her to be able to secure some form of external income. In achieving this, Ida took up the long established enterprise among many of the HMS missionary women of sewing the European-styled wedding garments that had become popular amongst the congregants of the HMS's mission stations. In doing so she used the HMS network to travel from one mission station to the next over the "wedding season" that lasted from July till October each year, coinciding with the time between the harvest of the yearly maize crop and the planting of the next to come. They were dresses that earned her a pound a piece along with an extra ten shillings for the "going-away dress". After her first year, she managed to put aside no less than nineteen pounds with which she bought herself a cow. Then in the second, her work around the region earned her enough to be able to afford a used "Singer" sewing machine with which to advance the self sufficiency of her operation. Travelling between friends and relations she therefore spent numerous occasions with the Behrens's at *Bethanie*, as well as with other HMS families that included the Rodewalds at *Berseba* and Wenhold's of *Kana*. Moving between these HMS mission stations she was often also enlisted to assist in the preparation of dowries for those of the respective families' daughters that had become engaged. This was a laborious exercise that typically involved the stitching of all linens, cloths and towels along with the stuffing of pillows and blankets with which the bride was to begin her new home.¹² Then, at the end of

¹⁰ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 10.

¹¹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 10.

¹² H. Behrens, "Gomutti". 1975. p. 2.

August in 1912, her aged father, the Missionary Ernst Wehrmann, died at *Wehrmannsrüh* which made her self-sufficiency all the more important still.¹³

While Ida had taken up the enterprise of a travelling seamstress and *Hausstütze* (house keeper) among the region's HMS missionaries and their descendants, Gussy Behrens had completed his schooling at the Eendracht School by mid-1912. As had been the case for his brother before him, his father had determined that he too should go into business and tried to arrange for him to complete an internship at the Pretoria firm, Beckett & Co. This was the same Mr Beckett who had been instrumental in August Behrens's own start as a businessman. However, times were tough for the company and instead, it was arranged for Gussy to work for a fellow German Pretoria market agent, a certain Mr. Köhly. Here Gussy spent the first month on probation whereafter he received three pounds a month in wages. Given that his board and accommodation cost four pounds and ten shillings per month, his father had to pay in extra during this time. As the year progressed, Gussy's wages were gradually increased so that after six months he was earning six pounds per month and after the first year this had increased to seven pounds and ten shillings. As for his accommodation it had been arranged for Gussy to stay with a family of German immigrants whose husband and father, a Mr Thiel, had owned a small shop in the vicinity of the Pretoria railway station before succumbing to an early death. This had left his wife with their six young children to fend for themselves. In doing so the eldest two boys, Paul and Otto, had been unable to finish their primary education before being required to help earn an income for the family. Yet, in spite of the trying times, Gussy Behrens recalls the buoyant mood that seemed to reign in the Thiel household in which he was soon counted as one among its family.¹⁴

It was after the first year of his time working for Mr Köhly that Gussy Behrens was able to afford a second-hand bicycle with which to boost his mobility around the town. As for the work, Mr Köhly owned a business that traded in used building materials that were acquired through the purchase of old buildings before these were demolished and processed to be able to resell the recycled components on the Pretoria market. Among his fellow employees, Gussy recalls that he got along particularly well with the company's Swiss bookkeeper and secretary, a certain Mr. Freitag, while a Mr Nel did most of the electrical sawing and planing at the

¹³ H. Behrens & H. Wehrmann (ed), *Wehrmannstreffen*. 1983. p. 4.

¹⁴ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 10-11

company's yard. For his part, Gussy Behrens was tasked with collating the various orders that had been placed with the company before delivering them to their required destinations around the town. In this same fashion, Mr Köhly bought the rights to a big Johannesburg mining compound in the first months of 1914 that then similarly needed to be dismantled into its reusable components. It was a windfall that soon turned out to have enormous benefits when in July that year, the world was plunged into the First World War.¹⁵

Nationalism

The descent into World War One along with its dramatic consequences for countries around the world, would come at a crucial time in the history of the newly formed South African nation state.¹⁶ Yet for an individual such as Gussy Behrens, the war barely seems to have been given a passing mention in his reminiscences. Indeed, when examining the broader experiences of the Transvaal's German community in the twelve or so years between the end of the South African War and the beginning of World War One, it is striking to note that the community generally makes little to no reference to any of the political events taking place during this period. This is certainly just as evident from the memoirs of August Behrens whose recollections seem to be restricted to the material and financial concerns that followed in the wake of the South African War. Even so, it is possible to surmise that the Transvaal's German community continued to remain keenly aware of the changing nature of both regional and international politics. In particular, it is the evidence regarding a new and growing sense of German nationalism within the Kroondal community immediately after the 1899-1902 conflict that, in the absence of other more explicit references, provide some of the best insights into the political awareness of the community during this time.¹⁷

Beginning with the founding of the *Kroondal Schulverein* in 1903, it is perhaps not surprising that the first clear indication of German nationalism in Kroondal can be found in the decisions that were made with regards to the education of the community's children. While the origins of the school and the significance of its funding by the German state and patriotic German associations have already been mentioned in the preceding chapter, it is the use of one word, namely that of

¹⁵ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 11.

¹⁶ T. Dederling, "Die Deutsche Minderheit in Südafrika während des Ersten Weltkrieges." *Deutsche evangelische Kirche im kolonialen Südlichen Afrika*. (ed. H. Lessing, J. Bessen, et al). 2011. p. 269.

¹⁷ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. Krugersdorp, 1979. p. 5.

Deutschtum, as it stands written in the initial paragraph of the Kroondal *Schulverein*'s statutes, that offers the first specific indication of the community's association to the ideals of German nationalism.

*Der Zweck des Schulvereins ist die Erhaltung des Deutschtums in Transvaal. Der Verein stellt sich daher zur Aufgabe, nebst der kirchlichen Gemeinde ein zweites Bindeglied für die Deutschen zu werden, welches die zerstreut lebenden Deutschen sammeln, durch Pflege und Erhaltung der deutschen Sprache und durch gemeinsame Erziehung der Kinder in einer deutschen Schule u.a.m das Deutschtum kräftigen und seinen Fortbestand bei den Kommenden Geschlechtern gewährleisten soll.*¹⁸

The purpose of the School Association is the maintenance of *Deutschtum* (Germanness) in the Transvaal. To this end the Association intends to serve, alongside the church, as a second point of affiliation for those Germans who are scattered across the region. (Accordingly), it is through the practice and maintenance of the German language and the communal education of its children in a German school, that the Association sets itself the task of strengthening *Deutschtum* and thereby ensuring its continuation for the generations to come.

(Own translation)

The significance of *Deutschtum* as it is read in this passage, which can be translated into English as either Germanness or Germandom, must begin with some reference to its etymology in the German language.¹⁹ Having emerged as part of the anti-Napoleonic sentiments at the beginning of the previous century, the idea of *Deutschtum* was associated to the development of German nationalism long before the arrival of the unified German nation state.²⁰ At its core, the word supposes the existence of a shared German culture and way of life that its proponents argued extended beyond the boundaries of a political state.²¹ It was an interpretation of nationality that by the mid-nineteenth century had given rise to the idea of a broader German *Kulturnation* (nationalism based upon shared cultural and religious

¹⁸ G. Meyer, *Die Pflege der deutschen Sprache im Westlichen Transvaal*. (Masters Dissertation) 1956. p. 30; T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. Krugersdorp, 1979. p. 21.

¹⁹ T. Jones, *The Oxford - Harrap Standard German-English Dictionary*. volume 1. 1977. p. 26.

²⁰ H. Alberand, et al. (ed.), *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*. 6 Band. 1983. p. 821.

²¹ G. Drosolowski, *Duden. Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. 1976.

traditions) in which emigrants were supposedly not lost provided that they maintained the connection to their *Deutschtum* or Germanness.²² Accordingly, those Germans who had departed their homeland were increasingly considered *Auslandsdeutsche* or Germans abroad as opposed to simply being *Auswanderer* or emigrants.²³ In this same fashion, the word also took on a second meaning in which *Deutschtum* could be used to denote the idea of “Germanity” as a “collective reference” to the sum of German people around the world; a definition that was often specifically used with reference to German expatriate communities as “*das Deutschtum im Ausland*” (the Germans abroad).²⁴

While these views regarding the use and interpretation of *Deutschtum* were by no means uniformly acknowledged across the politically (and culturally) disparate German populations, the advent of German unification in 1871 served to give its ideas a new and influential impetus.²⁵ Having been established under Prussian leadership, the fledgling German state hoped to foster a new sense of national loyalty that was, however, based upon a decidedly Prussian and protestant vision of what such Germanness might entail.²⁶ Far from succeeding, the reaction to these policies and those associated with the political conflict that became known as the *Kulturkampf* (Culture Struggle) of the 1870s, only served to entrench the cultural and confessional differences that they were meant to traverse.²⁷ It is, therefore, hardly surprising that by the time *Kaiser* Wilhelm II, ascended to the throne in 1888, many German nationalists were still bemoaning the lack of national unity that continued to dog their dream of German solidarity.²⁸ As for the new and decidedly ambitious German monarch, his preoccupation with securing Germany’s status as a world power soon included the consolidation of its recently acquired colonial empire.²⁹ Drawing upon the framework of this new German imperialism, nationalists seized the

²² T. Lekan, “German Landscape”. *The Heimat Abroad. The Boundaries of Germanness*. (ed. K. O’Donnell, et al.). 2008. p. 141.

²³ S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The “Greater German Empire”, 1871-1914*. 2014. p. 11.

²⁴ T. Jones, *The Oxford - Harrap Standard German-English Dictionary*. volume 1. 1977. p. 26.

²⁵ R. Shilliam, *German Thought and International Relations: The Rise and Fall of a Liberal Project*. 2009. p. 151.; K. O’Donnell, et al., *The Heimat Abroad. The Boundaries of Germanness*. 2008. p. 28

²⁶ D. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad. Cultural Policies and National Identity in Namibia*. 2002. p. 2.

²⁷ F. Kidner, (et al.), *Making Europe: People, Politics, and Culture, Volume II: Since 1550*. 2009. p. 636; J. Vermeiren, “Germany, Austria and the idea of the German Nation”. *History Compass* (9/3). 2011. p. 204.

²⁸ D. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad. Cultural Policies and National Identity in Namibia*. 2002. pp. 2, 12.

²⁹ J. Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II: A Concise Life. 1859-1941*. 2014. p. 78.

opportunity to use the creation of the German empire as the means with which to unite the country. In doing so they not only regarded the Empire as an opportunity to provide an alternative destination for the scores of German emigrants but, thereby, also hoped that these expatriate communities would provide a new “model” of unified Germanness for those in the “old *Heimat*”.³⁰

It was within the context of this drive towards a new and unified German identity that the idea of *Deutschtum* was increasingly brought to the fore. Driven by the creation of various patriotic and predominantly middle class associations such as the ADV and the DKG, the German public began to express a growing interest in both the nature and extent of German communities abroad.³¹ These sentiments were also fuelled by an increasingly popular perception of Germanness as an ethnic (as opposed to purely cultural) signifier that had its roots in the *Volkish* (ethnic community) movement of the earlier nineteenth century. This was the same notion that had influenced the founder of the HMS, Ludwig Harms, in his vision of a German Christian mission.³² By the end of the nineteenth century, these notions of ethno-cultural Germanness were not only being applied as a form of romanticised argument, but were also beginning to have a direct effect upon state policies. This is witnessed by the fact that in 1897 a general review of German citizenship laws made even greater allowances for expatriates to be able to retain their citizenship once abroad.³³ Taken together, they were events that by the beginning of the twentieth century had brought the notion of *Deutschtum* into the spotlight of Germany’s new internationalism and thereby too, as Manz has pointed out, into the growing awareness of German immigrant communities around the world.³⁴

As the enthusiasm for German nationalism and the politics of *Deutschtum* began to take hold, the beginning of the 1900s witnessed the dramatic growth of German

³⁰ D. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad. Cultural Policies and National Identity in Namibia*. 2002. pp. 2-3, 12; S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The “Greater German Empire”, 1871-1914*. 2014. pp. 54-55.

³¹ S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The “Greater German Empire”, 1871-1914*. 2014. p. 56.

³² H. Harms, *Concern for the Unreached. Life and Work of Louis Harms, founder of the Hermannsburg Mission*. 1999. pp. 32, 36.

³³ H. Sargent, “Diasporic Citizens”. *The Heimat Abroad. The Boundaries of Germanness*. (ed. K. O’Donnell, et al.). 2008. p. 25.

³⁴ S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The “Greater German Empire”, 1871-1914*. 2014. pp. 36-37, 54-55.

clubs and associations amongst German expatriate communities across the globe.³⁵ Mirroring these events the community of Kroondal was, therefore, hardly unique when it chose to align its newly founded *Schulverein* to the so-called *Deutschtumspolitik* of the time.³⁶ Yet in spite of the seemingly patriotic nature of this decision, it is, nevertheless, interesting to observe that the Kroondal community were probably not without their own motives in this regard. At a time when its members were still counting the cost of the recent war the financial burden of beginning a new school was all but insurmountable. Stepping in to fill this need, the German government and patriotic societies would have presented the community with the obvious opportunity of a new benefactor. In this sense, it may well be asked whether the sudden and conspicuous use of the word *Deutschtum* in the *Schulverein's* statutes may have been, at least in part, influenced by the level of support that was then forthcoming via the German consulate and the Pan-German League.

Either way, the primacy of financial considerations (as opposed to those purely based on ideology) are reasonably substantiated from the *Schulverein's* own minutes, dated to 24 July 1913.³⁷ Here the *Schulverein's* committee reviewed the report of a commission that it had tasked to approach the new South African government in the hope of eliciting funds for the Kroondal school. While the government had rejected these requests on the grounds that there was no current legislation in place for it to be able to support private schools, it did offer to fully fund the Kroondal school if it were to agree to becoming a government school. It was a proposition that had sufficient traction within the committee to persuade them to take the proposal to the German consulate in Johannesburg to ask whether the German government would continue its support if the school were to become a South African government school, adding that the school hostel would continue its independent work for the maintenance of *Deutschtum* in the region. The question, however, was met with an unequivocal answer by the consul, *Herr Hang*, who assured them that the German funding would all but cease in the event that the Kroondal *Schulverein* was to become a South African state school. In the end the consul promised to enquire about the possibility for additional funds for the Kroondal *Schulverein* and

³⁵ S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The "Greater German Empire", 1871-1914*. 2014. pp. 1-2, 54-55.

³⁶ F. Schulze, *Auswanderung als nationalistisches Projekt: ‚Deutschtum‘ und Kolonialdiskurse im Südlichen Brasilien (1842-1941)*. 2016. p. 45; S. Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The "Greater German Empire", 1871-1914*. 2014. p. 117.

³⁷ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. Krugersdorp, 1979. p. 26.

the minutes of the meeting concluded that the committee members agreed that the school should continue to remain independent.³⁸

Although it is clear from the example of this meeting that the Kroondal *Schulverein* was prepared to both explore and leverage all possible avenues in its attempt to fund the schooling of its children, it is not enough to suggest that its adoption of German nationalist sentiments was merely based upon a sense of financial expediency. Rather, it could at best be argued that the community's awareness of the German Empire's growing support for its expatriate communities may, to some extent, have served to hasten the appropriation of German nationalism within its community. In any event, the appearance of German nationalism in Kroondal during the first decade of the twentieth century, represents an important juncture in the community's history that, up until this point, had been principally centred upon the HMS as its connection to the 'old *Heimat*' of Germany. It was a relationship that had been largely upheld by the HMS's practice of providing the services of its missionaries to the German communities as pastors.³⁹ This was an enterprise that in spite of its seeming benevolence, was certainly not without its benefits for the HMS who, once having seconded a missionary to a particular community, could be reasonably assured of regular financial contributions from its congregation in support of the HMS's coffers.

Although the HMS maintained the right to return such pastors back into the services of the Mission, the organisation could not but have recognised the benefits of maintaining a strong presence within these German communities who were also obliged to maintain their pastors with a salary and lodging.⁴⁰ Yet at the same time, the growing needs of these German communities had begun to weigh upon the HMS that still oversaw the general administration of their congregations. The result was that in 1910 (after deliberations stretching back to 1904)⁴¹ the HMS concluded that its (White) South African churches should be required to form their own synod and so doing, free the HMS of the burden of having to manage them. It was a decision that was initially met with the dismay of the German communities, despite the HMS's assurances that their standing arrangements regarding the secondment of missionaries to their congregations would remain unaffected. For their part, however,

³⁸ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. Krugersdorp, 1979. p. 26.

³⁹ Kroondal Church Archive. J. von Zwiétring, "Von den Deutschen Gemeinden der Hermannsburger Synode in Südafrika". 1953. pp. 4-5.

⁴⁰ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika*. 1988. pp. 133-134.

⁴¹ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. Krugersdorp, 1979. pp. 5-6.

the HMS remained unmoved in its resolution and on 31 May, 1911 the Hermannsburg German-Evangelical Lutheran Synod of South Africa was brought into being.⁴²

In spite of the significant realignment that was undertaken between the HMS and those of its descendant communities in the first years of the twentieth century, the continued proviso that allowed its missionaries to serve as pastors within these communities proved to be an important decision. Nowhere would this become more evident than in the community of Kroondal where in July 1905, as already mentioned, the young HMS Missionary, Johannes von Zwiétring took on the position of hostel master and assistant teacher in the new *Schulverein*. It was a tenure that would eventually span an astonishing forty five years and encompass not just his position as a teacher in its school but also as its pastor from 1916 onwards.⁴³ Yet, if the presence of von Zwiétring would help to maintain a vibrant connection between the Kroondal congregation and the HMS for almost half a century to come, then his presence in the community also represented some of the important changes that were then beginning to take hold. Born almost ten years after the annexation of the Kingdom of Hanover by Prussia in 1866 and having served in the German Army between 1892 and 1894, the young East Frisian had been brought up in a world that had marked differences to that which had been the norm for the original HMS missionaries.⁴⁴ In this sense, von Zwiétring represented one of a new breed of HMS missionaries who had been raised on a steady diet of increasingly persuasive German nationalist sentiments. Therefore, arriving in Kroondal at a pivotal time in the community's history, the new teacher came to represent something of a bridge between the old and familiar institution of the HMS and that of the new, emerging identity that was being offered by the rise of imperial Germany.

One of the key elements that undoubtedly helped to link the communities of HMS descendants in South Africa with the politics of Germany's imperial nationalism, was the congruency that seemed to exist between the ideals of *Deutschtum* and the identity that had long been part and parcel of a community such as Kroondal. Based upon the quasi-religious interpretation of their German nationality as part of a divine

⁴² Kroondal Church Archive. J. von Zwiétring, "Von den Deutschen Gemeinden der Hermannsbürger Synode in Südafrika". 1953. pp. 4-5.

⁴³ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 16.

⁴⁴ H. Pape, *75 Jahre Kirchengemeinde Kroondal 1896-1971*. 1975. p. 218.

order of creation (*Schöpfungsordnung*) the ethnic-volkish basis of the HMS had been instrumental in the community's steadfast resistance to anything but the most necessary forms of assimilation.⁴⁵ Moreover, the almost exclusively rural nature of the HMS as came to be expressed in the mission's epithet, *Bauernmission* or farmer's mission, had been a cornerstone of its founder's own idealisation of the agrarian and landed values of the German (Hanoverian) peasant communities. This to the extent that the HMS seminary had purposefully extolled the virtues of hard physical labour in the curriculum of its students.⁴⁶ Thus, when placed against the values that were increasingly thought to exemplify the ideal of *Deutschtum* amongst Germany's colonial expatriates, namely that of a "Hard working, parsimonious, protestant agrarian class filled with staunch nationalist values and devotion to the emperor, with the 'traditional' German family at the core of (its) society",⁴⁷ it is easy to see how the idea of *Deutschtum* would have struck a powerful chord with a community such as Kroondal.

Surveying the nature of these developments in Kroondal in the years between the end of the South African War and the Beginning of World War One, its period can be regarded as an important transition in the overall makeup of the community's identity. However, as much as the rise of German nationalism had emerged to play an important part in the development of Kroondal's settlement, it was by no means the only South African community to be increasingly affected by the influence of nationalist sentiments during this period. At a time of heightened global awareness regarding the ideals of national self-determination, the deep divisions within the newly formed South African nation state were soon brought to bear.⁴⁸ Nowhere was this more immediately evident than in the communities of the former Boer Republics for whom the brunt of the South African War had been especially severe. Robbed of their independence and for many of its poorer members, the basis of their agrarian lifestyle, the bitterness of the war became the foundation for the politics of what would become the Afrikaner nationalism of the twentieth century. Yet, on the other hand, they were politics that were also accompanied by the more tempered, though no less ambitious sentiments of men such as the former Boer generals Louis Botha

⁴⁵ W. Wickert, *Und die Vögel des Himmels wohnen unter seinen Zweigen. Hundert Jahre Bauernmission in Südafrika*. 1949. p. 320.

⁴⁶ E. Lüdemann, (ed.), *Vision: Gemeinde weltweit. 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission und Ev.-Luth. Missionswerk in Niedersachsen*. 2000. pp. 34, 54.

⁴⁷ D. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad. Cultural Policies and National Identity in Namibia*. 2002. p. 2.

⁴⁸ M. Perry, *Western Civilization. A Brief History*. 1997. pp. 429, 443.

and Jan Smuts, whose willingness to reconcile themselves to their inclusion into the British Empire bore the beginnings of what would become a more inclusive (White) South Africanism.⁴⁹ While it is important to mention that this same period also saw the first stirrings of Black South African nationalism, it is an aspect that will be discussed in the next chapter. In the interim, however, it would be the predominance of White political policies and those of Afrikaner nationalist sentiments in particular, that would most influence the Kroondal community's experience of the first few decades of South Africa's political history.

Although the ideological development of Afrikaner nationalism is not the focus of this thesis and, therefore, will not be discussed at length here, it is important to note something of the circumstances that contributed to its rise. Having emerged in the political establishment of the ZAR at the beginning of the 1880s, the idea of an Afrikaner people or *volk* drew upon the notions of a shared cultural and linguistic Dutch heritage in the establishment of its commonality.⁵⁰ As a term the word 'Afrikaner' had initially been used as a descriptor for those (White) individuals who had committed themselves to a future in Africa, its use had gradually become associated to those communities of Dutch ancestry who, as in the case of the largely agrarian Orange Free State and South African republics, had generally referred to themselves as Boers.⁵¹ However, for many of these communities, the changing economic and political circumstances at the end of the nineteenth century had seen an increasing and often involuntary shift away from the agricultural lifestyle of their forebears and into the more cosmopolitan confines of cities. Accordingly, their identification as 'Boers' or farmers had become increasingly incongruous with the reality of their changing circumstances, to which their more general identity as Afrikaners soon became a popular designator in its stead.⁵² It was, therefore, with the further and dramatic upheaval of the South African War that the post war period saw the beginnings of an embittered and increasingly ethnically orientated conceptualisation of Afrikaner nationalism. This became an important factor for regions such as the Western Transvaal where many of the poorer tenant farmers or *bywoners* who had been forced off farms in the Free State, were able to secure new tenures with landowners in the Western Transvaal. It was a move that in the words of historian Hermann Giliomee, "injected a spirit of political militancy" into the region

⁴⁹ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. pp. 271, 355, 357.

⁵⁰ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. pp. 262, 356.

⁵¹ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. pp. xix, 234.

⁵² H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. pp. xix, 323-324, 356.

that was to have important consequences in the not too distant future;⁵³ That future duly came into being when in August 1914, Britain declared war upon Germany.⁵⁴

The First World War

The outbreak of war in Europe that automatically also placed South Africa at war against Germany, had an enormous impact upon the dynamics of the Union's fledgling politics. With the memories of the Anglo-Boer conflict still fresh in the minds of South African citizens, the prospect of supporting Britain in a war against Germany was unconscionable for many Afrikaners.⁵⁵ This especially given that the German public had been vocal advocates in favour of the Boer cause during the recent hostilities. However, for the ruling South African Party and its Prime Minister Louis Botha, the desire to justify South Africa's new position as a self-ruling dominion within the British Empire drove the Union government's position to take an active role in the new war. In doing so, the Union parliament acceded to Britain's request for a South African led invasion of neighbouring German South West Africa that was duly announced on 14 September 1914. It was a decision that was met with dismay by many Afrikaners, including prominent members of the Union's Defence Force, that prompted some officers such as the former Boer General C. Beyers to resign their commissions. Even more alarmingly, however, was when the commanding officer of the South African invasion forces, Lieutenant-Colonel Manie Maritz, went one step further only a few weeks later, by not only resigning his commission, but also defecting to the Germans along with a number of his men. This decision by Maritz proved to be the trigger for a short lived but, nevertheless, pointed Afrikaner rebellion that quickly took hold in areas across the northern Free State and western Transvaal in 1914.⁵⁶

Led by a string of former Boer generals and gathering support from primarily poor and younger Afrikaners, the rebels had hoped to garner enough support to overthrow the South African government and declare independence from Britain. But, more than this, historians also agree that the rebel leaders' promises of financial assistance to those poorer Afrikaners struggling to remain on the land, were at least

⁵³ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. p. 379.

⁵⁴ K. Shillington, *History of Africa*. 1995. p. 343.

⁵⁵ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. p. 379.

⁵⁶ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. pp. 379-383.

as big a motivating factor for many to join the rebel cause.⁵⁷ In the midst of these developments it is once again interesting to note that the German communities in the Western Transvaal left almost no indication of their own perceptions of the rebellion. One notable exception to this trend can be found in the unpublished diary of the HMS Missionary and then regional superintendent, Heinrich Behrens (no direct relation to August Behrens), who was stationed at the HMS mission station of *Eben Ezer*. Beginning on 10 August, 1914 the diary entries record snippets of the missionary's experiences of the war as well as the rebellion that followed:

*Wie steht die Welt auf dem Kopfe! In Europa ist Krieg! Das liebe Vaterland von Feinden ringsum bedrängt! 5 Mächte gegen 2! ... Ists möglich Herr, so hilf unsrem lieben armen Vaterland! Wir hören hier, zuerst 3 deutsche Schiffe weg, 8000 Mann tot. Dann 19 deutsche Schiffe weg und 2500 Mann tot, alles deutsche Schiffe, engl. Schiff 1 auf Mine gekommen. Von Toten keine Zahl. In Rußland soll Deutschl. gesiegt haben.*⁵⁸

How the world has been turned on its head! There is a war in Europe! The dear Fatherland is threatened and encircled by enemies! Five Powers against two! ... If it is possible, Lord, then help our poor, dear Fatherland! At first we only heard that 3 German ships had been sunk, 8000 men dead. Then 19 German ships sunk and 2500 men dead, all German ships. One English ship had struck a mine. No mention of any dead. In Russia Germany is meant to have had a victory.
(Own translation)

As the diary entries continue, Missionary Behrens notes on 25 August that Japan had entered the conflict and wondered whether the war would spread to South Africa. Then after almost two months without an entry, the diary next records that South Africa had entered the war against Germany and that the Union had set itself against the German colony of South West Africa. In this entry Missionary Behrens remarks that despite the governments' declaration of war "many of the Boers remained opposed to it" (*Doch wollen viele Bauern nicht*) and that a commander of the Union Army by the name of Maritz had gone over to the Germans.⁵⁹ Ten days

⁵⁷ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. pp. 379-382; S. Swart, "Desperate Men: The 1914 Rebellion and the Politics of Poverty". *South African Historical Journal*. 42, May 2000. pp. 161-162.

⁵⁸ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". p. 148.

⁵⁹ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". pp. 148-149.

later, on 26 October, the missionary wrote that three Boers came past the mission station hoping to locate the rebel Union General Christiaan Beyers at Maretlwane in the Magaliesberg and that farmers throughout the region had been joining the cause against the Union government. Then on 2 November, one last entry is written into the log for 1914 reading as follows:

*Ein seltsamer Morgen! Muß in die Kriegsgefangenschaft! Die lieben Meinigen alle hier zurücklassen. O wie schwer! ... 2 Commandos zogen hier Freitag vorbei, Sonnabend Morgen haben sie mit den Aufständischen bei Soutpansdrift gefochten...etliche Tote und Verwundete. Schrecklich, ein Bürgerkrieg!*⁶⁰

A strange morning! I am to be taken as a prisoner of war! Have to leave my loved ones behind. O how hard! ... Two commandos came past here on Friday. On Saturday morning they had a battle with the rebels at Soutpansdrift... numerous dead and wounded. Terrible, a civil war!
(Own translation)

It is in following these brief and personalised remarks from the diary of the missionary that we get some idea of the manner in which the onset of the First World War might have been received by the German community in the Transvaal. On the whole, the mood of Missionary Behrens's entries is characterised by feelings of dismay towards the outbreak of hostilities. In spite of this, there is no denying that his concerns were primarily with the fortunes of Germany, to the extent that numerous entries bemoan the fact that the South African press were not providing unbiased commentary on the developments in Europe.⁶¹ On the whole, however, there is no evidence to suggest that the missionary supported the rebel Afrikaner cause and throughout his entries the primary concern is always directed towards a speedy end to hostilities. As for the fate of the missionary, who was taken into custody by the Union Government that November, it was one shared by many other German citizens in South Africa following the outbreak of war in July. Although mainly targeting German officers and reservists, the South African government soon extended its suspicions to include German missionaries who it feared might be in a position to incite anti-British / government sentiments among their Black congregations. As a result, the majority of German missionaries were ordered into

⁶⁰ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". p. 149.

⁶¹ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". pp. 148-157.

custody whereupon they were transported to the Fort Napier internment camp in Pietermaritzburg, Natal.⁶² While many, though by no means all, of these missionaries were soon released, it was a parole that was only granted on the proviso that they prove their peaceful intentions and, thereafter, present themselves at their local police station at regular intervals. Among those fortunate enough to be released was Missionary Behrens who was able to return home by mid-January 1915, whereupon his journal entries record his annoyance at the whole exercise.⁶³ As for the rebellion, the Union government's intervention along with the poor levels of organisation on the part of the rebels led to their defeat by the beginning of 1915, but not without having re-emphasised the significant divisions that were still at play between various segments of South Africa's White population.⁶⁴

As the war drew towards the end of its first year, a new set of unpleasant events compounded the self-conscious position of the South African German communities. Having already been somewhat stigmatised by reports of German atrocities in Europe, the anti-German sentiments among South Africa's anglophile population reached a climax when a German u-boat torpedoed and sank the British cruise liner *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland in May 1915. With the loss of over a thousand passengers and crew, the public outrage against the seemingly indiscriminate nature of the attack, triggered a spate of anti-German riots in cities around the world. These were soon re-enacted in South Africa, where the larger English speaking communities in urban centres such as Johannesburg similarly vented their frustrations by vandalising shops and properties that were believed to have German connections.⁶⁵ Other instances of rioting followed in cities such as Durban, Bloemfontein and Cape Town where the generally anti-German mood amongst their English speaking communities likewise resulted in significant damage to property. They were events that once again found their way into the diary of Missionary Behrens when he wrote on 15 May:

Was ist das doch eine Zeit! Immer wütet noch der große Krieg. Allem Anschein nach wird jetzt mit ganzem Ernst gefochten. Und hier fällt man über wehrlose Menschen her, wie in Pretoria, Joh'burg...Man hat deutsche Geschäfte

⁶² T. Dederling, "Prisoners of War and Internees". (Union of South Africa). *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, (ed.) U. Daniel, Peter Gatrell, et al. 2014. pp. 2-3.

⁶³ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". pp. 149-150.

⁶⁴ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. pp. 380, 382-383.

⁶⁵ T. Dederling, "'Avenge the Lusitania': The Anti-German Riots in South Africa in 1915". *Immigrants & Minorities*. Vol. 31, no. 2. 2013. pp. 257-258.

*demoliert, aber auch ausversehen aus sonst was einige von anderen Nationen. Möchte es nur nicht kommen, das alle Deutschen wieder interniert werden!*⁶⁶

What a time this is! The Great War is still raging. Every indication is that the fighting continues with full intent. And here unarmed people are being attacked as in Pretoria, Johannesburg...German shops have been destroyed, but also those of other nations by mistake. May it not happen that all Germans will be interned again! (Own Translation)

While the missionary's fears that the anti-German riots would result in the re-internment of German nationals proved to be unfounded, the effect of these xenophobic outbursts were enough to have a significant impact upon German communities in urban centres such as Johannesburg. Here, the initial outbreak of war in 1914 had seen students from the Johannesburg German School gather to burn British and Italian flags in what appears to have been a spontaneous though decidedly ill-conceived display of German patriotism. As a result, the government quickly closed the school for the duration of the war and reassigned its teachers to other schools in the city.⁶⁷ In comparison, rural German settlements such as Kroondal seemed to weather the war remarkably well, this to the extent that the only discernible complaints regarding the war in Kroondal appeared to have stemmed from the rigorous censorship of letters and the sudden termination of German government funding for its school.⁶⁸

Of course, a great deal of these relatively favourable circumstances could simply be attributed to the geographical positioning of Kroondal in the western Transvaal, given that its region was strongly characterised by the extent of its anti-British sentiments. But, more than this, it is possible to discern that in spite of Kroondal's growing association with the ideals of German nationalism, its community had remained aware of the need to communicate a strong sense of civic loyalty to the local government of the day. It was a trait that was already evident on the occasion of the inauguration of the Kroondal *Schülerheim* (school hostel) in 1904 as described at the end of the previous chapter. Accordingly, the desire to be regarded as "good citizens

⁶⁶ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". p. 151.

⁶⁷ Deutsche Internationale Schule Johannesburg, *Schulgeschichte*. Access: 8-8-2017, <<http://dsj.co.za/schulgeschichte/>>

⁶⁸ Kroondal Church Archive. J. von Zwierring, "Von den Deutschen Gemeinden der Hermannsburger Synode in Südafrika". 1953. p. 4.; T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. pp. 26-27.

of the land” (*gute Bürger des Landes*)⁶⁹ undoubtedly played an important part in the Kroondal community’s efforts to remain as unobtrusive as possible during the political upheavals of the war. Such sensitivity is similarly observable from the meeting minutes of the Hermannsburg Synod that took place on the eve of the outbreak of the conflict on 8 July, in New Hannover, Natal. Here, a proposal that the Synod should include a prayer for the German Kaiser in its supplications was roundly rejected (*welcher besagt, in das Allgem. Kirchengebet eine Fürbitte für den Deutschen Kaise(r) aufzunehmen, findet keine Sympathie*;⁷⁰ as too was the alternative suggestion that a prayer might be included for the German “Fatherland” and its “rulers” (*Fürsten*). Instead, it was decided that such additions should be left to the individual congregations to decide for themselves.⁷¹ Taken together with the policy of government censorship and the obvious threat of internment that emerged soon after the onset of fighting, it is, therefore, not surprising that the community of Kroondal eventually left so little information regarding the community’s general sentiments during the conflict.⁷² While this does not discount the likelihood that, as in the case of the Missionary Heinrich Behrens, Kroondal’s community continued to nurture strongly pro-German sentiments during the war, it does explain the firm degree of caution that seems to have been exercised by the community in relation to its event.

Second Generation: Gussy Behrens & Ida Wehrmann

It is against this backdrop of events during the First World War and its effects upon the German communities in the Transvaal, that this chapter returns to investigate the narrative of the Behrens family. Having completed his schooling in Pretoria at age eighteen and thereafter entering into a commercial apprenticeship at the behest of his father, Gussy Behrens would complete three and a half years of work in a Pretoria company between 1912 and the end of 1915. It was a time that he recalled with great fondness and he writes of his enjoyment of life in the bustling centre of town. With no costs other than those of his board and lodging, the young man was eventually able to afford the purchase of a Bradbury motorcycle that in 1915 was still considered a significant novelty. Though hardly comparable to later machines, the noisy twin cylindered Bradbury gave Gussy the freedom to undertake more regular

⁶⁹ Kroondal Church Archive. *Die Deutsche Gemeinde Kroondal im Rustenburger Distrikt, Transvaal*. 1953. p. 7.

⁷⁰ Kroondal Church Archive. Synodal Protokolle 1911-1964. p. 9.

⁷¹ Kroondal Church Archive. Synodal Protokolle 1911-1964. p. 9.

⁷² Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Von den deutschen Gemeinden der Hermannsbürger Synode Südafrika*. 1953. p. 4.

visits to his parents' home in *Bethanie*, as well as other trips around the region. Of these, one destination in particular that drew his attention was the home of the Berlin Missionary, Hermann Kuschke, in Johannesburg where his fellow Kroondal classmate and confirmant, Ida Wehrman spent a year working as *Hausstütze* (House keeper).⁷³ As the pastor of the Johannesburg German community and the founder of its German School, Missionary Kuschke and his family would have been directly exposed to the anti-German upheavals in the city during the war.⁷⁴ In this respect, although the exact dates of Ida Wehrmann's time with the Kuschke family are not known, they can be estimated to have included a significant portion of 1915 and, therefore, quite possibly also have coincided with the anti-German riots that took place during May that year. In spite of this, neither Gussy Behrens nor Ida Wehrmann make any references to those events that must, nevertheless, have left significant impressions upon them. Instead, even though Gussy Behrens mentions feelings of nervousness during his first excursion to Johannesburg in either late 1914 or 1915, it was apparently the prospect of seeing Ida rather than any self-awareness as a German South African that he credits as the source of this un-ease.⁷⁵

The courtship of Gussy Behrens and Ida Wehrmann that thus began at some point in the first year of the outbreak of war in Europe, was one that followed societal convention in that its intended purpose was endeavoured to be kept as secret as possible. Therefore, arriving unannounced at the Kuschke's home on that first Sunday afternoon, Gussy was greeted with the unfortunate sight of Ida leaving the house in the company of one of the Kuschke's sons on her way to attend an organ concert in the Johannesburg city hall. Waiting at the house for as long as he dared, Gussy finally gave up and swung himself back onto his motorcycle to roar back to Pretoria, plagued by the emotions of his unsuccessful venture (*"mit einem von Eifersucht und Ärger geplagten Herzen, unverrichteter Dinge nach Pretoria zurückgebraust"*).⁷⁶ Not to be outdone, the young suitor next conspired to attend the German Church in Johannesburg in the hopes of arranging a spontaneous meeting between them. However, it was a venture that was once again destined to be unsuccessful as by the end of the service Ida was nowhere to be found, having been instructed by *Frau* Kuschke to leave early so as to complete the preparations for the

⁷³ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 18.

⁷⁴ B. Brammer, "Adele Steinwender: Observations of a German Woman living on a Berlin Mission station as recorded in her diary". (Masters Dissertation) University of Pretoria. 2007. p. 31.

⁷⁵ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 18.

⁷⁶ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 18.

Sunday meal. Finally it would be the marriage of mutual friends on the HMS mission station of *Berseba* that allowed the pair to become better acquainted and, thereafter, to begin some more regular correspondence.⁷⁷

At the same time that Gussy Behrens was beginning to explore the prospect of a serious relationship, his father, August, was making his own plans for his son's future. Following Gussy's older brother, Heiny's, engagement in 1915, and his stated intention to want to cease working in his father's business to become a farmer instead, August Behrens determined that his second son should take his place in the family business. Therefore, it was at the end of 1915 that Gussy Behrens received the news that he was expected to return to Kroondal to begin working in the small subsidiary that his father had opened there some years before.⁷⁸ For Gussy, however, the recall to Kroondal was hardly welcomed as after five years of schooling and work in Pretoria he had begun to enjoy the possibilities that city life had to offer. In spite of this and honouring the wishes of his father he returned to Kroondal in January 1916 where he spent the first six months with Heiny, quartering in the back of the small corrugated iron structure that served as the community's shop. It was a stark contrast to life in the city that was made even harder given that the Kroondal farmers were still struggling to free themselves of the debt they had accumulated after the South African War. It followed that most of the Kroondal clients were only able to purchase items on credit that then had to be carried until the yearly harvest had been brought in. Even so, the limited supplies that could be stocked in the small shop meant that many of Kroondal's families frequented dealerships in Rustenburg instead. For their part, Gussy and his father placed their orders with the family's old business acquaintances of Beckett & Co. in Pretoria and Jagger & Co. in Johannesburg, who for their part, allowed August Behrens to run a rolling credit of his own. These debts were allowed to accumulate for a period of three months before being charged interest, whereupon it typically fell to Gussy to have to go cap in hand to his debtors to ask them to settle their accounts - a task made harder still given that the Kroondal community were all close acquaintances.⁷⁹

In spite of these constraints and the initially limited appeal that life in Kroondal had for him, Gussy notes that the close-knit nature of its community soon drew him into its fold. On top of this, the transition to a new life in Kroondal had the added benefit

⁷⁷ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 18, 20.

⁷⁸ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 15.

⁷⁹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 15-16.

of bringing him closer to the object of his affections, namely the young seamstress, Ida Wehrmann, who, having completed her time in Johannesburg, next spent a period working for the Wenhold family at the HMS mission station of *Kana*. Situated some thirty kilometres to the north east of Kroondal and as the home of his grandfather, the HMS Missionary Hermann Wenhold, *Kana* was hardly foreign territory for the young man to want to venture to. However, given both the nature and frequency of his excursions, Gussy felt compelled to keep the destination of his increasingly obvious interests a secret. To this effect, the benefits of his Bradbury motorcycle, that enabled him to cover this distance with relative ease, held the simultaneous disadvantage that its signature roar could be heard quite clearly across the district. At a time when motorcars were still a rarity in the region, the appearance of an even noisier motorcycle was rarer still. Therefore, in keeping with the clandestine nature of his intentions, Gussy would typically wait until sunset before wheeling the Bradbury for no less than a mile beyond the outskirts of the town before daring to kick the cylinders to life.⁸⁰

It was after one of these trips to *Kana* towards the beginning of 1916 that Gussy and Ida finally sealed their engagement while taking a walk after lunch on a Sunday afternoon. However, with Gussy's meagre income of eight pounds a month and no home to offer his bride, the pair decided to wait another year before announcing their betrothal. By this time, Ida had moved back home to her widowed mother at *Wehrmannsruh* some ten kilometres from Kroondal that then also became a frequent destination for the thundering Bradbury.⁸¹ With the new year, the young couple finally announced their engagement on 1 January, 1917 that was celebrated with a gathering at *Wehrmannsruh*. While the public knowledge of the engagement finally allowed Gussy to visit his love as often as he could, it did not provide the financial means that would allow him to proceed with the marriage. Furthermore, his father, August, believed his son to be still too young for matrimony and so the pair were forced to wait another two and a half years before being able to seal their union.⁸² It was a time that both groom and bride spent working to shore up their savings and in which Gussy in particular, devoted himself to the building of the house that would become their home.⁸³

⁸⁰ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 20.

⁸¹ H. Behrens & H. Wehrmann (ed.), *Wehrmannstreffen*. 1983. p. 4.; A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 19-20.

⁸² H. Behrens, "Gomutti". 1975. p. 2.; A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 20.

⁸³ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 20.

While the period of Gussy and Ida's engagement similarly offers next to no information on Kroondal's perception of the ongoing war, it does provide something of a window into the general nature of its community during this time. With the restricted flow of global trade and industry, the conflict had resulted in severe shortages that included the raw materials that would be required for the building of a house.⁸⁴ Assisting his son, August Behrens provided the site for the new home on the small property that he had bought in Kroondal in 1908, that lay directly across the road from the church and school. As for the materials, the foundations were laid using the stones that were taken from the ruins of Black African kraals that were found along the Magaliesberg foothills. These had to be loaded and drawn in by ox wagon for which Gussy had to rely upon the help of his uncles and relations given that there was little money with which to hire labour. As for the bricks, these were formed and baked on one of August Behrens's farms before being hauled to Kroondal - a process that began well before sunrise in order to gather and span the oxen that grazed on Kroondal's communal lands. Loam was used where ever possible instead of cement and the wooden beams and boards for the roof and ceilings were scavenged from an old farm house or acquired from cousins in Natal who had a woodworking business. The only features that were bought new were the front door and window frames that were ordered from Mr Köhly's Pretoria company. By the time the walls were finished the community's men gathered to perform the traditional *Richtfest* or topping off ceremony in which the roof was completed as a communal effort. In this case, a cask of beer was ordered and the day devoted to the project in which the older men directed proceedings from the ground (in suitable proximity to the cask of beer) while the younger men clambered among the beams to follow their directions. In general, however, the majority of the wood work was completed by Gussy's soon to be brothers in law, Richard and Hermann Wehrmann, along with substantial help from his new neighbours, Heiny Backeberg and Hans Lange, who joined him in working after hours and often late into the night.⁸⁵

If the communal and interconnected nature of Kroondal was demonstrated in the building of Gussy and Ida's house, then other examples abound to illustrate the nature of this characteristic within its community. These included the celebrations of the annual harvest in which the farmer with the biggest yields was crowned as

⁸⁴ K. Pallaver, "Organisation of War Economies (Africa)". *International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*. pp. 1-2, 4; A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 22.

⁸⁵ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 22.

Erntekönig or “king of the harvest”. He was thereupon obliged to host a banquet for his fellows,⁸⁶ some of whom were often not nearly as fortunate in reaping a return on their efforts. In doing so, these traditions helped to reinforce an ethos in which service to the community was regarded as a high virtue and the achievements of any individual always checked by their responsibility to the community as a whole.⁸⁷ In this same fashion, the community’s church and school required the service of committees whose trustees were likewise drawn from the small pool of farmers and tradesmen that made up its society.⁸⁸ Of these, the vast majority stemmed from the families of the first generation of HMS missionaries whose close association was only reinforced when the first generation of their descendants began to marry each other, thereby creating long swathes of interconnected family ties. This was already quite evident when surveying the connections that were in existence by the time of Gussy and Ida’s courtship and marriage, in which an overview of Kroondal’s seventeen individual family plots by 1923 reveals that two belonged to the Müller family, two to the Langes, three to the Penzhorn’s and four to the Wenholds.⁸⁹ Of these, the Behrens family were already connected to the Wenholds through the marriage of August Behrens to Dora Wenhold in 1890, while the Wenholds were connected to the Penzhorns through the marriage of Dora’s brother Theodor to Johanna Penzhorn in 1895.⁹⁰ In turn, another of the Wenhold brothers (and therefore also Gussy Behrens’s uncle) Otto, had married Lina Backeberg in 1906 while his younger brother Karl, had married Elisabeth Müller in 1909.⁹¹ As for the Wehrmann family, Ida’s older sister Marie, had married the school’s head teacher, Eduard Penzhorn in that same year (1909) so that by the time of Gussy and Ida’s engagement in 1916 their lines of kinship within the Kroondal community were already extended to include eleven of the seventeen families residing there.⁹² Therefore, when considering not only the familial and confessional ties that existed between members of the Kroondal community, but those of the strongly interdependent economic bonds as well, it is difficult not to underscore the close-knit nature of its community.

⁸⁶ H. Behrens & I. Behrens. *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989.* 1989. p. 28.

⁸⁷ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 15.

⁸⁸ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein.* 1979. p. 22.

⁸⁹ H. Behrens & I. Behrens. *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989.* 1989. p. 47.

⁹⁰ H. Behrens & J. Wenhold (ed.), *Wenholdstreffen.* 1987. p. 29.

⁹¹ H. Behrens & J. Wenhold (ed.), *Wenholdstreffen.* 1987. pp. 57, 68.

⁹² H. Behrens & H. Wehrmann (ed), *Wehrmannstreffen.* 1983. p. 73.

All the while that Gussy and Ida Behrens were concerning themselves with the material and financial objectives that were required for their marriage, the events of the First World War continued, though still without any specific mention from the Kroondal community. Therefore, returning to the diary entries of the HMS Missionary Heinrich Behrens at *Eben Ezer*, we can follow some of his experiences of the on-going war:

15 Jan. 1916

Es sind schon einige Tage von dem neuen Jahre wieder hin. Hier geht das Leben so weiter. Da draussen in der Welt ist noch immer der fürchterliche Krieg. Auch hier bereitet man sich auf den Feldzug gegen D.O.A. vor. Wann wird doch dies Elend enden?...Grossartig können die engl. Zeitungen den endlichen Sieg der Allierten vorstellen. In Deutschland soll Hungersnot sein!!!⁹³

Quite a few days have already passed again since the start of the new year. Here life goes on as normal. Outside in the world the terrible war still wages. Even here preparations are being made for a campaign against German East Africa. When will this misery end?...The English newspapers enthusiastically claim to foresee the eventual victory of the Allies. There is meant to be a famine in Germany!!! (Own translation)

4 März.

Die Zeitungen schreiben von einer gr. Schlacht bei Verdun. O, dieser unglück. Krieg. Und was für Lügen werden verbreitet, bes. durch England. Es ist für mich ein Rätsel, wie eine ganze Nation fast ohne Ausnahme, so den Lügen nachgehen kann.⁹⁴

The newspapers write about a great battle at Verdun. O, this unfortunate war. And what lies are being spread, especially by England. It is a mystery to me how an entire nation, almost without exception, can be taken in by such lies. (Own translation)

⁹³ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". p. 154.

⁹⁴ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". p. 154.

The perceptions of the missionary, that offer a sense of the relative isolation that likely coloured the experience of many of the region's German communities, also reiterate a level of interest in the conflict that could reasonably be assumed to be the case for many of its members. However, while the missionary frequently expressed his dismay at the partisan nature of the English press, it is just as notable that these annoyances were rarely accompanied by any more serious complaints that might have stemmed from his position as a German in South Africa during this time. Some exceptions to this trend include the brief mention on 5 May, 1916 that the government would henceforth take over control of the German missionary schools along with the fact that he was often required to present himself to the police at Marikana. For the most part, however, the diary entries remain concerned with the ins and outs of daily life, that in July of 1916 records a visit to Kroondal where his colleague and the founder of its settlement, Pastor Christian Müller, had died after a heart attack at age eighty.⁹⁵

If it is possible to assume that the sentiments in Missionary Heinrich Behrens's diary were also true for the inhabitants of Kroondal, then the beginning of a new, annual report by the Kroondal school teacher and newly co-opted pastor, Johannes von Zwiétring, in 1916, nevertheless remains careful to avoid any overt mention of politics. Instead, the report emphasises the blessings of what appears to have been a peaceful year for the community: "Amidst all the unrest across the entire world, our community was able to continue to advance itself in peace".⁹⁶ Other than this, the report commemorates the passing of Missionary Müller whose position, therefore, had to be filled by a somewhat reluctant and increasingly overburdened Missionary von Zwiétring, alongside those of his other duties as teacher and hostel father.⁹⁷ In this same fashion, von Zwiétring's report for 1917 testifies to what he refers to as an even less remarkable year, though one that was certainly not without its noteworthy developments. In particular, the arrival of German women and children internees (officially referred to as refugees) in South Africa following the Union government's military campaign in German East Africa,⁹⁸ clearly made an impression upon the Kroondal congregation as was illustrated in the following remarks in von Zwiétring's report:

⁹⁵ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". pp. 155, 160.

⁹⁶ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 1.

⁹⁷ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. p. 38.

⁹⁸ R. Pierard, "Allied Treatment of Protestant Missionaries in German East Africa in World War I", *The African Journal of Evangelical Theology*. 12.1. 1993. pp. 8, 11.

Als zu der gewöhnlichen Not durch die Ausweisung deutscher Frauen und Kinder aus Ostafrika noch eine neue Not hinzukam, da hieß es allgemein: Wir müssen helfen. Und es ist geholfen, geholfen mit Geld, Lebensmittel, Eier und besonders auch durch anhaltende Obstsendungen. Und so hat die tätige Liebe die Herzen derer aus Ost - und Südafrika fest vereint.⁹⁹

Apart from the normal areas that required charity, the arrival of German women and children from East Africa necessitated a new need for charitable giving, to which the general response was: We have to help. And help we did, we helped with money, provisions, eggs and especially continuously parcels of fruit. And in this way the acts of love united the hearts of those (Germans) from East and South Africa. (Own translation)

Reading these words by von Zwiétring, it is impossible not to recognise the sense of pride that this passage seems to exude. For a community that had seemingly been careful to avoid any too obvious displays of German patriotism during the first years of the conflict, it appears that the opportunity to contribute to the German cause was met with a resounding response. In this respect, von Zwiétring's remarks regarding the sense of unity between Germans in Africa provide a fitting example of the nationalist sentiments that appear to have been kept alive in Kroondal at the time,¹⁰⁰ sentiments that appeared to have become increasingly obvious as the war gradually drew to a close.

Indeed, it is in relation to this specific development (regarding the arrival of German East African civilians in 1916) that some further information is available to corroborate both the growing sense of partisanship within Kroondal, as to the sense of suspicion that Kroondal's sentiments seem to have elicited from members of the English speaking population in the area. Taken from an anonymous article published in the *Rand Daily Mail* (RDM) on 3 December, 1917, under the caption, "The Hidden Hand", the correspondent makes clear his sense of disquiet regarding what he described as "the German invasion of Rustenburg" and the "indiscriminate dumping"

⁹⁹ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 2.

of “enemy subjects” into that area of the Union.¹⁰¹ Going on to refer to Kroondal as “a veritable little Berlin”, he bemoaned the fact that arriving East African Germans had not only been “received with open arms by their (South African) kin”, but had also been assisted in the establishment of businesses and finding general employment.¹⁰² While the writer continued to list various other accusations regarding Kroondal’s actions, including the community’s decision to continue their school’s education “exclusively in the German language”, most of his grievances appear to be related to what was perceived as the partisan attitude of its (Kroondal’s) population, as emphasised in the following excerpt:

The demeanour of the Germans is most provoking. Statements are indulged in on the conduct of the war, causing an infinite amount of ill-feeling. They publicly animadvert unfavourably upon newspaper reports of any Allied victories, and declare the accounts are falsified, yet any set-back to the Allied arms is jubilantly credited.¹⁰³

Thus, while the article itself appears to have been written with an obvious degree of bias, it is interesting to observe that in this respect, it does corroborate the personal sentiments of Missionary Heinrich Behrens (as mentioned earlier in this chapter) and thereby, supports the use of the Missionary Behrens’s diary as a source of insight into the sentiments of Kroondal at the time.

As much as such published sentiments undoubtedly served to characterise Kroondal’s experience of the war, it seems that in general, a sense of prudence continued to prevail along with those of the more general concerns of life in and around the settlement. One such concern, that would have an important effect upon Kroondal’s community was the HMS’s decision in 1917, to sell those portions of land on which the *Bethanie* Mission Station was located. It was a decision that had been precipitated by the falling out between the HMS missionary at *Bethanie*, Wilhelm Behrens (junior) and the HMS directorship in 1910 that saw the missionary and his congregation secede from the HMS. In turn, the HMS eventually decided to sell its lands in and around the *Bethanie* mission station that included the little neighbouring

¹⁰¹ (Anonymous), “The Hidden Hand - Transvaal’s Little Berlin”. *Rand Daily Mail*. 3 December, 1917. p. 6.

¹⁰² (Anonymous), “The Hidden Hand - Transvaal’s Little Berlin”. *Rand Daily Mail*. 3 December, 1917. p. 6.

¹⁰³ (Anonymous), “The Hidden Hand - Transvaal’s Little Berlin”. *Rand Daily Mail*. 3 December, 1917. p. 6.

German community of *Berseba*.¹⁰⁴ As in other such instances in the past, the members of this community were drawn towards Kroondal as the hub of German communal life in the Transvaal. Among them were August and Dora Behrens who, despite their increasing involvement in Kroondal since the end of the South African War, had maintained their residence and primary business at *Bethanie*. Therefore, closing the shop at *Bethanie*, August and Dora moved onto a farm that they had bought in the vicinity of Kroondal and, in so doing, finally became full members of its community.¹⁰⁵

It was with these new additions to their number that the inhabitants of Kroondal and their affiliates in the surrounding area, entered into 1918 with high hopes for the year ahead. Where the Kroondal congregation had numbered two hundred and six individuals in 1916 (one hundred and fourteen adults and ninety-two children),¹⁰⁶ the addition of the families from *Berseba* had seen its numbers rise to two hundred and forty five members by the start of 1918. Furthermore, the arrival of good rains in the summer of 1917/18 proved to be a boon for the farmers who were able to celebrate a record harvest of wheat along with generous returns on other crops such as tobacco, oats and maize.¹⁰⁷ They were benefits that were greatly welcomed and indeed much needed by many within the community who, in the absence of German government funding for the school since the beginning of the war, had struggled to pay their annual fees.¹⁰⁸ For a shop keeper such as Gussy Behrens, the boom for the farmers had its own benefits and he recalls the pride with which he was able to report to his father that the income from sales on Christmas Day in 1917, that stood at eighty pounds, were twenty pounds more than those of the previous year.¹⁰⁹ Further afield, on the HMS mission station of *Eben Ezer*, the Missionary Heinrich Behrens likewise entered his hopes for the new year into his diary on 31 December:

Sylvester. 1917 geht zu Ende. Wir sind noch hier. Gottes Segen war reichlich mit uns. Haben auch unsre Arbeit tun können. Aber der Krieg dauert weiter, doch wollen wir Gott danken, daß er uns bisher geholfen hat, auch unserm

¹⁰⁴ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsburg Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1880-1939*. Göttingen. 1988. pp. 132-132.

¹⁰⁵ A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 82.

¹⁰⁶ Kroondal Church Archive. Kroondal Statistischer Berichte 1916-2005. p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. p. 26.

¹⁰⁹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 18.

*Volke, den Deutschen. In der letzten Zeit viel Regen...der die Eisenbahnbrücken zerstörte...Auch heute abend Regen, sodaß kein Sylvestergottesdienst stattfinden konnte... O Herr, vergib wo wir gefehlt haben. Regiere Du all unser Tun auch im neuen Jahr. Segne uns im Hause, in der Gemeinde, in der Mission. Gieb auch Frieden und hilf unserm Volke zu einem ehrenvollen Frieden. Durch Buße und Glauben an Dich. So Wollen wir das alte Jahr beschließen in Deinem Namen und ein neues anfangen in Deinem Namen.*¹¹⁰

Sylvester (Saint Sylvesters Day). 1917 comes to its end. We are still here. God's grace has been with us in abundance. We have also been able to continue with our work. But the war continues, even so we want to thank God that he has helped us till now, and helped our people (*Volke*), the Germans. In the last while there has been lots of rain...that has damaged the railway bridges...There is rain again tonight so that the Sylvester church service cannot take place... O God, forgive us where we have failed. Govern everything that we do in the new year. Bless our home, our community, the mission. Give us peace and help our people (*Volke*) to find an honourable peace. Through penance and prayer. Now we want to close the old year in your name and begin the new one in your name. (Own Translation)

In spite of the optimism that appears to have been prevalent within the German community at the start of the new year, the events of 1918 were, nevertheless, destined to bring significant heartbreak for the Germans in the Transvaal. Even so, the first months of 1918 did bring some hope to the Missionary Heinrich Behrens when in March he noted that Russia and Romania had capitulated to the Germans. However, only two months later the missionary's mood appears to sour with the news that the city of Cape Town had arranged for the public observance of a prayer in aid of a speedy Allied victory:

*In Kapstadt...um 12 Uhr alles stillsteht - 3 min. lang betet für Sieg der "Gerechten" - die Allies Kämpfen ja fürs Recht, wie sie sagen. Was da wohl für Gebete gemacht werden! Kann ein Weltmensch beten? Der Herr sagt: Ich mag das Geplärr eurer Lippen nicht hören.*¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". pp. 159-160.

¹¹¹ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". pp. 160-161.

In Cape Town...at 12 o' clock, everything is to stop for 3 min. to pray for the victory of the "righteous" - naturally, they regard the Allies as the ones fighting for what's right. What manner of prayers can these be! Can a worldly person pray? The Lord says: I will not listen to the noise of your lips.

(Own Translation)

In August, the missionary's diary once again fluctuates between reports of German defeats and their renewed advances until in early October the missionary notes, somewhat resignedly, that things were looking bad for the Germans (*Nicht gut, wie's scheint für uns* - "It seems it is not going well for us").¹¹² Then, only ten days later the diary's focus suddenly swings to the outbreak of disease at *Eben Ezer*.¹¹³ It was the beginning of the Spanish influenza that tore its way across the world in a remarkably short period of time and, so doing, inflicted its highest rates of mortality on those younger and supposedly healthier members of society.¹¹⁴ Although its actual epicentre is still a matter of dispute, the virus seems to have made its first appearance in South Africa among the Black mining hostels of the Witwatersrand in September 1918, before rapidly spreading across the country in what was then dubbed "Black October".¹¹⁵ At *Eben Ezer* the effect of its disease quickly claimed a number of Missionary Behrens's congregants, notably those in their late teens and early twenties.¹¹⁶ Further to the north, the community of Kroondal was likewise affected and this at the worst possible time given that the wheat crop was waiting to be brought in from the fields. Everywhere, however, farmers and workers were lying ill and some fears arose that the harvest might spoil. In one account, the Kroondal farmer Georg Wenhold was said to have been determined to proceed with the harvest and despite being ill himself, gathered the only two workers that he could muster and proceeded to cut the wheat in his fields. This decision resulted in his worried wife repeatedly returning to check that her husband's fever had not rendered him unconscious due to his efforts.¹¹⁷ It was a gamble that paid off and the farmer

¹¹² N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". p. 162.

¹¹³ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". p. 162.

¹¹⁴ J. Oxford, "Origins of the Great Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918". *Royal Society*. 2001. p. 1857; H. Phillips, "Black October": The Influence of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918 on South Africa." (Doctoral Thesis) University of Cape Town. 1984. pp. 67.

¹¹⁵ H. Phillips, "Black October": The Influence of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918 on South Africa." (Doctoral Thesis) University of Cape Town. 1984. pp. 1, 10.

¹¹⁶ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". p. 162.

¹¹⁷ H. Behrens & I. Behrens. *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zum Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989*. 1989. p. 80.

survived together with his harvest. For others, however, the illness would prove far more costly.

With reports of mounting deaths from across the country and the infection's particularly virulent effect against the younger members of society, the Kroondal school had no option but to close its doors until the influenza had passed.¹¹⁸ As for the school's popular headteacher, Eduard Penzhorn, and his wife Marie (nee Wehrmann), their own family of five children were soon also affected when one of their youngest became gravely ill to the point that it seemed certain he would not recover. Yet, in the midst of the concern for the child, it was his father, Eduard who suddenly took ill so that within a matter of hours he himself believed his end to be near. While the virus gradually abated to allow him a degree of recovery, it returned in force by mid-December so that two days after Christmas, the thirty eight year old teacher succumbed to his illness, leaving his wife, then already pregnant with their sixth child, utterly distraught.¹¹⁹ It was a terrible blow to both the family and the community to which his fellow teacher and the community's Pastor, Johannes von Zwiétring, wrote in his report that 1918 marked the saddest Christmas in the community's history.¹²⁰ It was a sadness that was, no doubt, only compounded by the news that after more than four years of war, Germany was finally in a state of collapse and that an armistice had been signed on 11 November.¹²¹ Although no mention of these events are made in the pastor's annual report, anecdotal evidence suggests that the community similarly took these events to heart and of these, none more so than Pastor von Zwiétring, as is read in the following passage:

...der Niedergang des Deutschen Vaterlandes brachten den Heimvater, der in seinem Herzen nach wie vor echter Preuße war, in schwerste Bedrängnis. Zudem war mit der Amtsübernahme der Gemeindepfarrstelle 1916 Herrn von Zwiétring eine erhebliche, weitere Belastung zugewachsen, die kaum tragbar schien.¹²²

¹¹⁸ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". p. 162; T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. p. 27.

¹¹⁹ (Anonymous), *Eduard und Marie Penhorn: 100 Jahre*. 1982. p. 40.

¹²⁰ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. pp. 3-4.

¹²¹ N. Behrens, (ed.), "Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940". p. 162.

¹²² T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. Krugersdorp, 1979. p. 38.

...the demise of the German fatherland brought with it particular distress to the hostel father (von Zwierring) who, as before, had maintained the heartfelt loyalties of a committed Prussian. On top of this, the added responsibility of having had to assume the pastoral duties for the community in 1916 brought Mr von Zwierring a further burden that barely seemed manageable.

(Own Translation)

If von Zwierring's emotions were kept well in check in his annual reports, then his sentiments of support for the defeated Germany found their ample expression in an initiative to begin sending aid back to Germany. As before (when the East African refugees arrived in South Africa), these packages included donations of money, tobacco and maize that were directed towards the district of Hannover as the place of origin or "old Heimat" for most of the families in Kroondal (*unsere hannoverischen Heimat*)¹²³. Quite remarkably, this effort, that operated as part of a broader (German South African relief effort, the *Deutsch-Afrikanischen Hilfsausschuss* (DAHA), would continue for a number of years (1919-1925)¹²⁴ despite the fluctuating nature of Kroondal's own financial position over this period.¹²⁵ Other than this, the end of the war gradually saw the community emerge from its position as *persona non grata* to resume a sense of normality that had not been possible to maintain over the course of the conflict.

This was certainly true for the young couple, Gussy Behrens and Ida Wehrmann, whose lengthy engagement was finally brought to an end on 20 June, 1919. Married in the Kroondal church in the morning by Pastor von Zwierring, the bride and groom walked across the road to their new home where a small reception was held. As the groom's father, August Behrens had wanted the wedding to be marked by a big celebration, but in light of the Wehrmann's limited means and the recent tragedy of Ida's widowed sister, Marie Penzhorn, the celebration was kept to a simple gathering in front of the house.¹²⁶ Then with the celebrations completed, the couple were taken in a wild procession of carriages to the Rustenburg train station where Gussy had secured tickets to travel to the Natal South Coast on a two week honeymoon.¹²⁷ It

¹²³ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwierring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 7.

¹²⁴ (Anonymous), *10 Jahre Deutsch-Südafrikanischen Hilfsausschuss, Pretoria 1945-1955*. 1955. p.1.

¹²⁵ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwierring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. pp. 7-15.

¹²⁶ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 24.

¹²⁷ H. Behrens, "Gomutti". 1975. p. 3.

was an expensive, and by Gussy's own admission, utterly luxurious undertaking that he had only been able to afford by parting with his beloved Bradbury motorcycle.¹²⁸ Therefore, returning two weeks later, the newly wedded Gussy and Ida Behrens undertook the finishing work that was needed to complete their house before moving into what was eventually dubbed, "*Rosenhof*" (Yard of Roses).¹²⁹

The period of Kroondal's development consisting of the first two decades of the twentieth century, was one that can be regarded as an important juncture in the community's history. At a time when the ideologies of nationalism were reaching a peak in Europe, it did not take long before the settlement likewise became enthused with the ideals of German nationalism. At its core was the idealisation of Germanness or *Deutschtum*, that had become a rallying call for groups such as the *Alldeutscher Verband* in their efforts to promote Germany's political and cultural influence around the world. It was certainly no accident then, that the newly formed *Kroondaler Schulverein* was among the recipients of the financial support that could be garnered through these organisations. In doing so, it is noteworthy that the *Schulverein* became an enthusiastic proponent of these ideals that would, therefore, also go on to become a defining feature of the next generation of Kroondal's descendants.

In comparison, for those of the first generation of HMS missionaries, the beginning of the twentieth century marked the gradual thinning of their ranks so that by the end of World War One, the last of Kroondal's founding missionaries had passed away.¹³⁰ In this sense, the war marked a passing of batons between the generations at the exact time that the rise of German nationalism began to replace the sense of regional patriotism that had been the hallmark of the HMS. Stepping in to fill these shoes was the new and energetic figure of the younger HMS missionary and, from 1916 onwards, Pastor Johannes von Zwiétring, whose sense of both religious and national duty helped to bridge the identity of the HMS mission and the German nationalism that was then coming to the fore. They were sentiments that were, moreover, informed by the increasingly popular perception of Germanness as a factor of

¹²⁸ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 24.

¹²⁹ H. Behrens & I. Behrens. *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989.* 1989. pp. 94-95; A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 24-25.

¹³⁰ H. Pape, *Hermannsbürger Missionare in Südafrika.* 1986. pp. 7, 16, 89, 126, 140, 204, 208. (This excluding the two younger, German immigrants and co-founders of the settlement, Georg Ottermann and Heinrich Lange)

descent rather than merely a function of civic allegiance or place of residence.¹³¹ This, in turn, gave credence to the idea of a supranational German community in which Germans all over the world were increasingly imagined as part of a greater *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* ('community with a shared destiny')¹³² - a belief that was certainly evidenced in Kroondal's efforts to provide aid to German populations affected by the war.

While the emergence of such pan-German sentiments was to play an important part in determining the influence of German nationalism in Kroondal, it is just as important to remain cognisant of the fact that they also coincided with a period of significant uncertainty in South Africa's political history. Beginning with the dissolution of the ZAR, the period between the end of the South African War and the country's Union in 1910 was marked by a rapid succession of various political administrations that would have offered little sense of stability for a community such as Kroondal. In contrast, the influence of imperial Germany and those of its associated organisations provided a sense of continuity in supporting (and even idealising) the settlement's German identity. As such, the German government's willingness to provide a significant degree of financial support for the community's school meant that Kroondal was given an added incentive to maintain its commitment to its German heritage. It is from this standpoint that Kroondal began its experience of the twentieth century in the grips of a crucial dichotomy. Where on the one hand, the community's notion of nationality remained firmly identified with Germany, the reality of its location meant that the duty of citizenship now lay firmly with its newly adopted South African *Heimat*. Thus, it is in taking the complexities of this stance into consideration that the end of the First World War can justifiably be regarded as the beginning of Kroondal's full expression as a diasporic community rather than simply a community of expatriates. And, it is in this vein that the next chapter investigates the history of the Kroondal settlement as part of the Behrens family's experiences in the years both leading up to and including the Second World War.

¹³¹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 65.

¹³² T. Wenhold, "Die Geschichte Kroondals". *Afrikanischer Heimatkalender*. 1970. p. 95.

Chapter 5 *Afrikadeutsche* - Germans in Africa 1919-1939

With the end of the First World War in 1918 the community of Kroondal was free to resume a degree of normality that had not been possible for the greater part of the conflict. While the settlement had been spared the worst effects of anti-German sentiments that had been a feature in many of the Union's urban centres, the restrictiveness of government censorship together with the general awareness of their (ethnic) German nationality had nevertheless been enough to dampen the community's activities during this period.¹ Therefore, it was with the lifting of the oppressive atmosphere of war that a renewed sense of freedom of expression became evident amongst its members who in 1919, founded the Kroondal *Debattierverein* or Debating Society with the express intention of "practicing the German language through debates".² This was followed soon thereafter by the founding of a tennis club (*Tennisverein*) that at its very first meeting attracted an enthusiastic throng of almost seventy Kroondalers who were willing to pay the one pound and ten pence that was to constitute the *Tennisverein's* annual fee.³ Taken together, they were initiatives that pay testimony to the rising influence of the settlement's younger generation whose ranks were now beginning to constitute the bulk of its adult community.

It was in the midst of this increasingly vibrant community that the newly wedded couple, Gussy (August Wilhelm Theodor) and Ida Behrens (née Wehrmann), moved into their newly completed home in Kroondal. The couple's house lay at the heart of the settlement whose congregation had already risen to two hundred and sixty-six individuals in 1919 compared to the two hundred and six that had been counted at the time of Gussy's return to Kroondal in 1916. It was the start of a period of rapid growth that would last for the next thirty or so years during which time the community would more than double the size of its membership from across the surrounding area. Among these were the former inhabitants of other smaller German communities such as those of *Bethanie* and *Berseba* that had been amalgamated with Kroondal's congregation in 1917. One of those celebrating these increases was

¹ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. pp. 1-4; Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Von den deutschen Gemeindedn der Hermannsbürger Synode Südafrika*. 1953. p. 4; T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. p. 38.

² G. Meyer, "Die Pflege der deutsche Sprache im Westlichen Transvaal". (Masters Dissertation) 1956. p. 35.

³ T. Wenhold, *50 Jahre Kroondaler Tennisverein 1920-1970*. 1970. pp. 1-2.

the community's pastor, Johannes von Zwiétring, whose sense of filial duty seemed to revel in Kroondal's growing position as the centre point of Germanness in the region.⁴ Similarly, for a shop keeper such as Gussy Behrens, the growth of the Kroondal community could not but have brought a gradual increase in sales with which to boost the family business, even if Gussy himself was initially not in line to receive any of the growing profits of its venture.⁵ Indeed, as he was still firmly in the employ of his father, Gussy's first year of marriage still had him earning the same eight pounds per month that he had been salaried upon his return to the settlement four years before. They were conditions that made for a difficult beginning for the newly wedded couple and for none more so than for the twenty-four-year-old Ida whose task it was to establish their home on this meagre income.⁶

Pflicht / Duty

As the daughter of an HMS missionary who had been raised in the mould of her resilient mother, Marie (née Schlaphoff), Ida was no stranger to hard work. Yet, where her mother had been forced to contend with the difficulties of life on the isolated *Manuane* Mission Station, Ida's new life in the midst of substantial numbers of friends and family came with its own significant set of challenges. Positioned in the centre of the Kroondal village and a mere stone's throw away from the community's church, the Behrens's new home of *Rosenhof* soon became an ideal gathering point for their friends and relations on their way both to and from the Sunday church services. Given that these were still observed in the tradition of the HMS's Lutheran piety, congregants were expected to attend both the morning and afternoon services that began at 09:30 and 15:00 respectively.⁷ In-between, many among the Behrens and Wehrmann families simply took to staying for lunch so that Ida was soon forced to contend with catering for up to twenty hungry relatives on any given Sunday, a task made harder still given that their pantry had not yet been able to accumulate any substantial reserves.⁸ On top of this, the idiosyncrasies of their various relations, such as the Wehrmann's habit of arriving up to an hour before the beginning of the

⁴ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 3. (...wo eine Gemeinde solche Gemeindeglieder gewinnt, da kann man wirklich von einer Stärkung der Gemeinde reden / Where a congregation receives members such as these then one can truly regard it as adding strength to the congregation)

⁵ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 34.

⁶ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 25.

⁷ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 4.

⁸ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 25.

first service, meant that a day that was intended to be one of rest quickly became among the busiest of the week for the young housewife.⁹

Settling into this new role, Ida Behrens had to make the best of what was at her disposal which for a newly married woman in Kroondal offered little by way of convenience. With only two pots and a large steel pan with which to begin her kitchen, the meals were prepared on a small coal and wood fed “Dover” stove that was notorious for burning the food. As for the pantry, the absence of electricity meant that considerable time and effort had to be invested in processing foods before these were able to be stored for any extended period of time. This included the cooking and canning of preserves, the fermentation of cabbage or *sauerkraut* and the smoking of meat that was undertaken in the colder winter months.¹⁰ Among those items that were most prized in the kitchen were milk and butter that frequently ran into short supply. For this purpose, the couple kept a number of cows on the settlement’s communal grazing that in of itself, necessitated a two mile walk in order to gather the animals before being able to receive fresh milk for the day.¹¹ As for the rest of the house, the lack of funds meant that furniture had to be acquired in stages and even then generally only through the most affordable means possible. To this end, the kitchen table was fashioned out of a wooden crate that had packaged a new set of plough shears being sold in the shop. A bathtub was made out of galvanised tin by a German plumber and ex-internee who had lingered in Kroondal for a time after the war. While old paraffin tins were used in various applications that included everything from cupboard drawers to bread baking tins.¹²

It was after the first year of marriage that Ida’s household duties were further increased when she gave birth to a baby girl in their home in August, 1920. Christening the newborn child, (Marie Dora) Alma, the couple were pleased to begin their family even if Gussy was initially disappointed that the first born had not been a boy. Followed by the arrival of three more children in the years thereafter, the family’s number soon grew to six. With every addition, however, came the added work of child rearing that included the sewing and knitting of all garments and the added time and energy that was required to feed, bathe and otherwise tend to their growing

⁹ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). p. 4.

¹⁰ H. Wenhold & J. Wenhold, (ed.) *Unsere Frauen Erzählen - Irene Behrens*. 1996. p. 76; Personal information: I. Matthee, Peak Drive, Pinelands, Cape Town. 2015-01-11; Ida Behrens, letter to Richard Behrens, 1944-05-14. Cape Town.

¹¹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 27-28.

¹² H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). p. 7.

family.¹³ It was a task that fell almost entirely to Ida who, as the woman of the house, was required to shoulder virtually all forms of domestic responsibilities while her husband was otherwise engaged in his vocation. For Gussy Behrens, this meant working in the shop from Monday to Saturday where he habitually stayed until late into the night to keep the books after the store had closed.¹⁴ It was a division of gender roles that certainly played an important part in characterising the relationship between Ida and her husband that in many respects, also mirrored something of the framework that governed Kroondal's society as a whole.

If there is one word that could be used to describe the nature of societal conventions in Kroondal during the first decades of the twentieth century, then it would be the word, duty, or *Pflicht* as it is read in German. Indeed, it is difficult to find an aspect of life within the settlement that was not under the firm influence of some sense of duty that, in many respects, served as the glue that kept its society together. Yet, at the same time, the sense of duty can also be seen as a significant source of tension in which the perception of mutual (and personal) responsibility was used to reinforce a strong degree of social conformity. It is a characteristic that can certainly be found in the church's *Jahresberichte* (annual reports) in which Pastor von Zwiétring used the opportunity to offer an appraisal of what he regarded as the community's general performance over the course of the year.¹⁵ While these were usually limited to remarks regarding church attendance (or the lack of such by some congregants), they did not shy away from making more pointed references to "wrongdoing" and "sin" (*Verkehrtheiten und Sünden*) that on one occasion included the admonishment of a bridal couple who (it seems) were found to have consummated their union before their marriage had taken place, a transgression for which they were suitably shamed in being required to ask the congregation for forgiveness.¹⁶ On another occasion, the pastor's remarks show an obvious concern for what he perceived as the dangerous allure of outside influences that might stem from the settlement's proximity to the regional centre of Rustenburg. A concern that he was, nevertheless, able to put to rest with the conclusion that the "desire to loosen the bonds of community" among the settlement's youth was still being suppressed by a "strong

¹³ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt...* 1975. pp. 29-31, 32.

¹⁴ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 4.; A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt...* 1975. p. 30.

¹⁵ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. pp. 2-12.

¹⁶ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 2.

counterweight” in most families (*Glücklicherweise findet der Hang zur Ungebundenheit unter der Jugend in meisten Familien doch ein starkes Gegengewicht*).¹⁷ On the whole, however, it seems that von Zwierring appeared satisfied with the dutiful behaviour of his congregation that included their attendance of both Sunday services and the charitable efforts or *Liebespflicht* (duty of love) towards their fellow countrymen in Germany.¹⁸

Where the position of the Lutheran church undoubtedly played the most visible role in defining the nature of duty for the Kroondal community, the workings of life within individual families are not necessarily as easy to gauge. It is here that the Behrens family offers an important source of information of daily life in Kroondal as it pertained to the roles that govern the relationships between men, women and children in the settlement. While there is no doubt about the fact that men were regarded as the breadwinners responsible for the financial wellbeing of the family, the delineation of this role was not always as clear as it might initially have appeared. This was certainly true for a woman such as Ida Behrens, for whom the significant shortcomings in her husband’s income had to be addressed through her own resourcefulness if she was to provide sufficiently for her family.¹⁹ In doing so she, as most other Kroondal women, applied herself to the rigours of her home’s industry in which everything from clothes to linen, food and even soap was processed and manufactured of her own accord, this in spite of the fact that her husband’s shop would have been well stocked in many of these areas.²⁰ It was a lifestyle that had been inherited from the previous generation of HMS missionary women whose husbands had similarly struggled to secure a substantial financial income for their families. In this respect, the role of HMS women had developed in a way that valued the skills of self-sufficiency, hard work and thrift by way of which they were able to complement the economic position of their husbands.²¹

In the case of Ida Behrens, her husband’s vocation as the community’s shop-keeper meant that she, unlike many other of Kroondal’s women, was able to utilise the

¹⁷ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwierring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 10.

¹⁸ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwierring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 10.

¹⁹ R. Behrens, “Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben”, *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 148.

²⁰ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 29-30.

²¹ J. Reller, *Die Mission ist Weiblich*. 2012. pp. 5, 29.

dealership's established market as a means of supplementing her disposable income. This she duly did when in 1926 Gussy opened a satellite shop on the north eastern boundary of the Kroondal farm where a mining company, *Eerstegeluk Platinum*, had been established after prospectors had discovered platinum there the previous year. Although the shop's new outlet initially struggled to make good returns on its investment, staples such as bread and meat were generally in high demand. Seizing the opportunity and in the absence of a nearby bakery, Ida Behrens took it upon herself to supply the new shop's "eating house" with fresh bread during the week.²² In doing so she used a wood fired oven that had been built behind their house with a capacity to bake approximately thirty loaves at a time. These were divided into two primary sizes with smaller 1/3 kg loaves being sold for 3d (three pence) and 2/3 kg loaves for 6d (six pence).²³ As the demand grew the weekly total of loaves climbed from one hundred and eighty loaves to a high of two hundred and seventy loaves that by then represented a virtual industry in their home. Achieving these high volumes required a regimen of work that needed to be completed besides those of her other household duties. Therefore, beginning the night before, the required quantity of flour was measured and sifted into an enormous, purpose made mixing bowl and the thirty bread pans were smeared with lard. Sufficient wood was placed into the oven and before going to bed, the embers from the kitchen stove were stoked and placed under a large pot of water for use the next morning. Waking up at four, Ida would light the outside wood oven before setting to work mixing and kneading the dough that, once having been weighed and placed into each pan, had to be left to rise for an hour. It was time that she used to prepare the family's breakfast and to tend to the children before returning her attention to the bread that then needed to be placed into the oven after the coals had been cleared. Leaving the first lot of bread to bake, the process would begin again to prepare a second batch for the pans that were refilled while the oven was being reheated.²⁴

It was with the results of these labours that Ida wrested a degree of personal control over the house's funds that provided her with a gross income of approximately a pound sterling for every two batches of bread being baked, that is before counting the expenses of wood, flour, salt, lard and other ingredients that were required to fund the operation. Yet, in doing so, the demands on Ida's time were strenuous to say the least and it was commonplace for her to sleep for no more than five hours a

²² A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt...* 1975. pp. 30-31.

²³ H. Behrens, "Gomutti". 1975. p. 3.

²⁴ H. Behrens, "Gomutti". 1975. pp. 3-4.

night in order to fill the day with sufficient time to meet all of her obligations.²⁵ Given the exacting nature of this daily regimen it is not surprising to discover that her role as mother to her children was similarly informed by an overarching sense of thrift and responsibility. As an essentially single parent for most of the week, the children were tasked to help around the home as soon as they were able and this particularly in the case of the eldest girl, Alma, who recalls receiving her first duties at the age of four.²⁶ In time these were extended to include the other children whose list of chores included feeding chickens, separating milk, polishing shoes and in the case of the girls, general assistance in the kitchen. It was a household that, by all accounts, functioned according to a strong sense of economy, but one that was not without its rewards given that Ida was eventually able to use her hard-won income to furnish the remainder of her home.²⁷

Black African experience of Kroondal - Naboth Mokgatle

Of course, when considering the nature of life and work in Kroondal during the first decades of the twentieth century, it cannot merely be thought of as an activity that had remained as the exclusive preserve of its White, German families. As with other White South African settlements of the time, substantial numbers of Black African employees in Kroondal must be regarded as an integral part of its society from the beginning of the farm's development. However, as with so many other areas of South African history, the role of Black Africans in Kroondal is one that tends to remain in the shadows of the settlement's White society even if many of its number belonged to the surrounding Black Lutheran community that had been founded by the HMS.²⁸ It is a separation that while not in keeping with the often inclusive practices of the first generation of HMS Batswana missionaries, had come to represent official HMS policy by the first decade after the turn of the century. They were decisions that had coincided with the HMS's resolution to relinquish its oversight of the affiliated German communities that had paved the way for the creation of the Hermannsburg German-Evangelical Lutheran Synod of South Africa in 1911. In doing so, the new HMS leadership had cited the need to maintain the ethnic and cultural distinctiveness of the local German community as one that should

²⁵ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 4.

²⁶ A. Muhl, "Alma Muhl geborene Behrens". *Unsere Frauen Erzählen*. H. Wenhold & J. Wenhold (ed.). 1996. pp. 54-55.

²⁷ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 148; H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 7-8.

²⁸ E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. Kroondal. 1996. p. 39.

remain separate from that of Black African communities. This occurred to the extent that the HMS asserted that its missionaries should not be regarded as members of their respective Black congregations, but rather only as those whose task it was to provide a service to these communities.²⁹ As for the question of whether these Black congregations should themselves be empowered towards a greater degree of independence, including the ordination of Black pastors, the HMS's leadership decided against such measures including a dogged refusal to consider instituting any form of higher education. In a similar fashion, the HMS remained firmly opposed to the introduction of English language education that in the aftermath of the South African War had been recognised by their congregants as an important tool in being able to navigate the increasing Anglicisation of the region as a whole.³⁰

It was with the increasingly conservative and moreover, overtly racial policies of the HMS at the beginning of the twentieth century, that it comes as no surprise that the Kroondal settlement had not endeavoured to foster closer ecumenical links with its neighbouring (Black) Lutheran congregation. Instead, at a time in South Africa's history when the country's union had just been achieved (in no small part) by dismissing the political aspirations of its Black population, it is noteworthy that the HMS decided to align itself with the racial politics of the new South African state.³¹ In the same way, it was certainly not surprising either, that when the government passed segregationist legislation in the form of the Natives Land Act of 1913, that this was readily accepted by the HMS as serving the best interests of the Black African population. In reality, the Act, that was used to delineate new boundaries between exclusively White farming areas and Black African Reserves, spelt disaster for many Black farmers who, in areas such as the northern Free State, had developed successful sharecropping arrangements with White land owners. Thereupon deemed illegal, the abolishment of such farming practices meant that many once prosperous Black farmers were forced to move into Reserves that initially constituted a mere seven percent of the country's agricultural land, or were alternatively persuaded into the role of wage labour. In doing so, the 1913 Natives Land Act radically reduced the self-sufficiency of the Black South African population

²⁹ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsburg Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1890-1939*. 1988. pp. 133-134.

³⁰ H. Bamman, *Inkulturation des Evangeliums unter den Batswana in Transvaal / Südafrika*. (Doctoral Thesis), UNISA. Pretoria. 2002. pp. 49-50, 114-115, 215-216, 271.

³¹ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 81-82.

who were thereby steadily pressed into an increasingly Westernised and capitalist orientated economy.³²

While the effects of the Natives Land Act would vary in both the range of its impact and the extent of its implementation, it set the precedent for much of South Africa's racial legislation in the decades that were to come.³³ In turn, it also accentuated the practice of migrant labour that by the beginning of the twentieth century had grown into a pervasive feature of life for most Black South African communities. In doing so, it became the norm for Black men to spend time away from their homes in some form of monetary employment, either as a requirement for their tribal authority, or as the means to raise the capital that would be needed for them to marry (or pay the state enforced tax).³⁴ In either instance, the periodic dislocation of Black African men, especially into urban areas, was soon akin to something of a rite of passage.³⁵ For its part, it became quite normal for White South African society to become dependent upon the availability of cheap, though often seasonal Black labour for everything from commercial to domestic employment.³⁶ In this respect, Kroondal was certainly no different to other White South African settlements and evidence suggests that it benefitted from a steady stream of contracted labour, other than those of the more permanent workers who were already living in the vicinity of the Kroondal *Ortschaft*. Taken together, the Black African workforce in Kroondal represents a continuous though essentially anonymous presence in the settlement of whom little to no information has been recorded.

In spite of this tremendous dearth in information there is one example of a Black migrant worker in Kroondal whose personal records provide us with an unusual level of insight into the world of a young Black African during this time. His name was Monyadioe Moreleba (Naboth) Mokgatle and his reminiscences of his experiences in the Kroondal settlement between 1923 and 1925, published as part of his autobiography, represent an extraordinary perspective of life in Kroondal that has no parallel to any other era in the settlement's history. Born in *Phokeng* in the vicinity of Rustenburg in 1911, Naboth Mokgatle formed part of the extended lineage of the

³² R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 84-90.

³³ W. Beinart, & P. Delius, "The Historical Context and Legacy of the Native Land Act of 1913". *Journal of Southern African Studies*. Vol. 40, 2014. pp. 667-668.

³⁴ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 92-94.

³⁵ V. Bickford-Smith, *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis: Cities and Identities in the Twentieth Century*. 2016. p.17.

³⁶ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. p. 92.

Bakwena paramount chieftaincy that had developed a relationship with the HMS following the arrival of Missionary Christoph Penzhorn there in 1866.³⁷ In doing so the Bafokeng had entered into the difficult process of acculturation that accompanied the conversion of members of its society who were thence forth encouraged to abandon many of their traditional customs. It was a process that was often fraught with compromise as its community attempted to bridge the divide between those who accepted the new religion and those who chose to remain faithful to the traditional customs of their forebears. This was quite true for Naboth's parents whose wedding was celebrated according to both Christian and traditional customs that likewise informed much of Naboth's upbringing.³⁸

While *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African* provides valuable commentary on the role of the HMS missionaries at *Phokeng*, it is the author's observations of life in Kroondal that are most relevant to this thesis. Beginning when the then twelve year old Naboth walked into the settlement shortly after Easter in April 1923, Mokgatle's account of his time in Kroondal provides the unusual appraisal of an early twentieth century White South African community as seen from the perspective of a Black South African individual.³⁹ When juxtaposed against the collection of Kroondal's own communal and family history, the account offers an invaluable depth of perspective on the German settlement during those years. As for the context of the young Naboth Mokgatle's arrival in Kroondal, it was a decision that came upon the back of a family altercation which prompted Naboth to leave his parents' home and seek a period of independence elsewhere. Having heard from other young boys that working in Kroondal was generally remunerated by the rights to a heifer after a year, Naboth determined to find some work there which he duly did in the house of Wilhelm and Ida Lange, just across the way from the Behrens's new home of *Rosenhof*.⁴⁰

Among the first observations that Naboth makes regarding his time in Kroondal are related to language and the fact that many of the settlement's German inhabitants were fluent in Setswana. It is a detail that seemed quite self-evident to the young arrival given that his experience of the Penzhorn family in *Phokeng* had been of their

³⁷ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 29, 56-57.

³⁸ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 1, 58-61.

³⁹ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 110-111.

⁴⁰ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 107-111; H. Behrens & I. Behrens. *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989*. 1989. pp. 46-47.

skill in the local language - this to the extent that Missionary Ernst Penzhorn had a better command of Setswana than Naboth himself.⁴¹ It was a proficiency that was shared by most if not all of the descendants of HMS missionaries who had been born and raised on mission stations in the region. Therefore, walking along the main road leading into the Kroondal settlement, Naboth was soon accosted in fluent Setswana by Theodor Wenhold, who correctly surmised that the young wanderer had likely run away from home.⁴² While the nature of his welcome was soon changed when a little way further he met the old Mr Heinrich Lange, whom Naboth describes as a “tall well-built man”, (the German sources describe him as “*schlank und von beachtlicher länge* / slim and of noteworthy height”),⁴³ his interaction nevertheless proved difficult given that Mr Lange did not speak any Setswana, not being of HMS stock. However, gesturing for Naboth to follow him, Heinrich Lange took him to his son and daughter in law, Hermann and Ida who, in the case of Ida Lange in particular, was fluent in Setswana, though notably with a different accent to his own having been raised on the HMS mission station of *Berseba* before moving to Kroondal.⁴⁴

It was here that Naboth hired himself to the Lange’s for a year in exchange for a female calf and began what he describes as a mixture of duties that mostly entailed work with the cattle that were still universally used as draft animals by the Kroondal farmers. And it was also in Kroondal that Naboth recounts his first true experience of a “European way of life” along with the racial segregation that had become part and parcel of its existence in South Africa at that time.⁴⁵ Although he does not say it in as many words, it seems obvious that Naboth’s perception of the HMS’s Penzhorn family at *Phokeng* was markedly different to the experiences of his time in Kroondal. Where he describes the Missionary Ernst Penzhorn as a self-proclaimed Mofokeng tribesman whose father, according to the tribe’s oral tradition, had been selected and chosen by the Bafokeng to be their missionary and teacher, life in Kroondal functioned according to far less egalitarian conceptualisations of agency.⁴⁶ Noting the difference in circumstances, Naboth wondered why the Black men who worked for the Langes were quartered in the tobacco shed and wheat store in which no chairs or tables were provided for them. It was a peculiarity that was only made clear

⁴¹ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. p. 62.

⁴² N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 110-111.

⁴³ H. Behrens & I. Behrens. *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989*. 1989. p. 56.

⁴⁴ H. Pape, *Hermannsburger Missionare in Südafrika*. 1986. pp. 124-125.

⁴⁵ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 112-113.

⁴⁶ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 56, 62.

to him when, joining an assembly of workers receiving their instructions from Mr Lange one evening, he took his seat on the bench next to his employer instead of on the ground along with the other men. It was an indiscretion that had to be explained to him by one of the older workers who did so in the following words:

Boy, you mustn't sit where a white man sits; you can't drink from the cups they use, eat from their plates, or sleep in the same house with them. Don't do it again...Didn't you see us all sitting on the ground? You are lucky he did not push you off or beat you.⁴⁷

While Naboth makes no reference to any beatings taking place in Kroondal during his stay, these were certainly not uncommon among the region's White farmers who used it as a means of enforcing a strong sense of paternalistic control over their work force.⁴⁸ Therefore, becoming aware of these new and unsettling circumstances, Naboth comments upon his own realisation that the world around him was ruled according to the separation of race in which he was thereby also expected to occupy a lower rung within its society. It was a hierarchy that he observed throughout Kroondal even if he notes that its German community were generally kind and generous enough to ensure that their employees were well fed. This, he accredited to the farmers' wives who together with their domestic servants, prepared their meals with use of the crops that were grown in the plots adjacent to each house. As for meat, Naboth notes that this was in plentiful supply following the slaughter and processing of pork in the winter months. Fruit could be picked and eaten at will, but not wasted. Only butter was said to be kept away for the exclusive use of the farmers and their families which coincides with the mention of its general scarcity in the settlement by other German sources.⁴⁹

If the conditions for Black workers in Kroondal, however benevolent, were determined according to the precepts of race, then the conventions that governed the roles of its adults seemed far less reasonable to those among its youth. This is evident from Naboth's recollections that German boys regularly defied their parents' wishes by joining the Black boys to play in the fields on weekends and holidays.

⁴⁷ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. p. 113.

⁴⁸ J. Higginson, *Collective Violence and the Agrarian Origins of South African Apartheid*. 1900-1948. 2015. p. 24.

⁴⁹ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 114, 125-126; T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. p. 37.

Here, free of the restrictions of the rest of society, the boys would spend hours in play and Naboth notes that many among the settlement's White children were likewise fluent in Setswana. In time, it was not unusual for these friendships to develop to the point that some of the German boys would supplement their friends' needs from their parents' homes when they deemed these to be lacking. For the most part, however, the divisions of Kroondal society held firm and despite having been baptised as a Lutheran in *Phokeng*, Naboth was never invited to set foot into the Kroondal church that his employers attended religiously on Sundays.⁵⁰ Neither did he choose to attend the thatch-roofed Lutheran church that had been built in 1910 for those Black families who lived on the Kroondal farm and he mentions that it was only serviced by a pastor from Rustenburg at lengthy intervals.⁵¹ It is a separation that Naboth once again describes with a degree of incredulity given that despite the other commonalities, the distinctions of race continued to hold sway:

Black and White Lutheran congregations did not mix. They sang the same-sounding hymns and had church services conducted in the same Lutheran ways, but they worshipped separately.⁵²

Yet, if there was one aspect that seems to have left a particularly bitter mark on Naboth's time in the Kroondal settlement, it was the farmers' often seemingly dismissive attitude towards the education of the farm's resident Black families. These (the workers) had repeatedly petitioned their employers for schooling to be provided for their children that Naboth relates, was eventually dispensed by a Black African teacher. According to the Kroondal sources, this was an aspect that was left to the HMS missionaries in Rustenburg who eventually built two classrooms during the period of Naboth's time in Kroondal.⁵³ It was here that the contentious issue of language seems to have come to the fore when the teacher not only provided his students lessons in the local Setswana vernacular, but also added some English lessons into his subjects' schooling. This was a decision that Naboth notes was met with the disapproval of some of the Kroondal farmers. Similarly, and towards the end of Naboth's time in the settlement, Hermann Lange overheard that Naboth would be

⁵⁰ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 85, 116.

⁵¹ E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. Kroondal. 1996. p. 39; N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. p. 116.

⁵² N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 116-117.

⁵³ E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. Kroondal. 1996. pp. 39-40.

returning home to be able to receive schooling in *Phokeng*; news that as Naboth recounts, was met by his employers scornful laugh, stating, “What would a monkey do with education?”.⁵⁴ While this incident did not prevent Naboth from remembering his time with the Lange family with some fondness, it serves to highlight the attitudes that underpinned the racial dogma that had since become part of societies such as Kroondal. They are attitudes that, once again, find an echo in some of the HMS’s correspondence of that time in which many in the organisation regarded the use of English education as merely creating “hochmütige Kaffern” (self-important Blacks). As the historian Fritz Hasselhorn notes, such individuals were thereupon typically considered “unusable” for White farmers who were thereafter unable to leverage the same authority over these members of their workforce.⁵⁵

For Naboth Mokgatle, who left Kroondal in July 1925, these prejudices would not prevent him from receiving an education which he began through the Pentecostal church that had established a rival mission at *Phokeng* in 1913.⁵⁶ It was a path that would eventually lead him into a life of political activism, though one that would never bring him back to the German settlement that had been so instrumental in beginning to shape his views. As for Kroondal, the account of its settlement and the customs of its people, as seen through the eyes of a young Black African, offer a unique moment of insight into a relationship that was otherwise almost exclusively preserved from the perspective of its White population. Among these are those references that are to be found among the life histories of the Behrens family who, as with the other members of the Kroondal settlement, employed a significant number of Black men and women, both in the shop and their home. For Ida Behrens, who had been raised on the HMS mission station of *Manuane*, her proficiency in Setswana was of an enormous benefit to her in communicating her requirements to her staff. However, at the same time, such fluency in its language did not prevent what also appears to have been a frequent and substantial degree of frustration between the level of her expectations for work around the house and that which her employees were willing or able to provide. As a woman whose life was squarely centred upon a strict sense of duty that favoured both thrift and hard work, Ida Behrens was often at odds with what she regarded as the “habitual unreliability” of her employees. These include general references that range from not packing

⁵⁴ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. p. 127.

⁵⁵ F. Hasselhorn, *Bauernmission in Südafrika. Die Hermannsburg Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik 1890-1939*. 1988. p. 122.

⁵⁶ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 74, 134-135.

sufficient wood for the bread oven to failing to bring the cows in to be milked on weekends.⁵⁷ For the most part, however, it was the predisposition for employees to take unscheduled leaves of absence or even to exit their employ entirely, as and when they pleased and often without forewarning, that brought both Ida and Gussy the greatest consternation.⁵⁸

One particularly unfortunate incident that was to have far reaching consequences for Ida and the Behrens family, occurred on a morning in early July, 1927 when it was discovered that the household maid and nanny, named only as Kathrina and Johanna, had died of asphyxiation in their room behind the house. These had taken a small coal fire into their room and it appeared that during the night a blanket had fallen into the embers to contribute to the deadly gas.⁵⁹ As the news spread, a large crowd from the surrounding Black community, including one of the girl's mothers, gathered around the house to accuse Ida of foul play and to lament the passing of the women. It was a thoroughly traumatic experience for all concerned with the result that for years thereafter, Ida struggled to find anyone who would enter into her employ.⁶⁰ Even so, while a range of difficulties appears to have been the norm between Black and White in Kroondal, there are sufficient references to mutual trust and reliance to suggest that many cordial relationships did exist, even if these were inevitably skewed due to their fundamental lack in equality.⁶¹

Where the nature of life in Kroondal had always been defined according to the principles of racial and ethnic identity, the development of South African politics during the 1920s increasingly sought to entrench these distinctions in order to create a norm of economic disparity. This had already been begun under the Smuts government with the passing of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, whereby all Black Africans were required to be in possession of a passbook when moving through towns and cities.⁶² However, it was with the voting in of the new (Afrikaner Nationalist and English Labour) Pact government under J.B.M. Hertzog in 1924 that the implementation of a 'civilised labour' policy created the justification for keeping

⁵⁷ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 28, 31.

⁵⁸ Ida Behrens, letters to Richard Behrens, 1944-07-30; 1944-09-10; 1945-04-26; A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 38.

⁵⁹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 32.

⁶⁰ H. Behrens, "Gomutti". 1975. p. 4.

⁶¹ N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. 1975. pp. 119-120, 122, 126; A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 25.

⁶² R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 103-105.

Black workmen in the industrial sectors out of higher paying positions. They were jobs that could thereby be reserved for Whites and so doing entrench a system of privilege on the back of a purposefully marginalised Black labour force.⁶³ In Kroondal, the effects of these laws were evident enough for Gussy Behrens to comment upon the fact that the Black mine workers in the area were not paid very much at all, approximately one to two pounds per month. In turn, Gussy's subsidiary outlet at the *Eerstegeeluk* platinum mine, initially struggled to show a profit and this especially when many of the mine's White miners, who were at first allowed to buy on account, failed to honour their debts. Finding these men difficult to satisfy and quite often dishonest, Gussy decided to focus the subsidiary on catering to the Black miners instead. In time, these therefore became an important part of Gussy's business that, together with the money that Ida earned from the 'eating house', provided a steady turn over for the shop to flourish.⁶⁴

Deutschertag / German Day

As Gussy and Ida Behrens's financial position began to improve, Gussy was able to purchase the family business from his father who, after more than thirty years of developing its enterprise, had retired to his farm, *Bergheim* (Mountain home), that he had bought in the vicinity of Kroondal in 1908.⁶⁵ Here, celebrating the occasion of his wife, Dora's, birthday in the year of their move to Kroondal in 1917, August Behrens arranged a large gathering of family and friends that easily equated to more than half the settlement. When this celebration was repeated the following year, the suggestion was made to use its event to host a general gathering for all the Germans of Kroondal in future. It was a proposal that was roundly accepted and in 1919 the inauguration of a 'German day' or *Deutscher Tag* became an annual event in the community's calendar. By 1924, these festivities had grown to the extent that they attracted Germans from as far afield as Pretoria and Johannesburg while the date of the event was then also moved to coincide with the Union's public holiday on 31 May. This was a day that was meant to commemorate South Africa's unification, but that thereby came to be used for the celebration of an alternative, German-South African identity in the region.⁶⁶

⁶³ W. Hut, *The Economics of the Colour Bar*. 2007. pp. 69-71.

⁶⁴ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 31.

⁶⁵ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 34.; A. Behrens, *Der Farmer von Kroondal*. 1956. p. 82.

⁶⁶ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 3.

The Kroondal German Days that would become the most prominent feature of the community's settlement for the next twenty years, represent the expression of a nationalistic German identity that had already been in its ascendancy since the end of the South African War. However, while communal efforts such as the establishment of the *Kroondaler Schulverein* pay testimony to its growing influence, the economic hardships of those years together with the need for political propriety during the First World War had contributed to its generally muted appearance for the greater part of that period. Now, with the end of the war and the gradual upturn of the settlement's economy, the sentiments of pride that the community associated with the identity of their Germanness found its renewed expression in these gatherings.⁶⁷ In fact, if anything, the First World War only appears to have sharpened Kroondal's commitment to its Germanness that in the wake of Germany's defeat in 1918, seems to have fuelled the sense of duty with which it sought to maintain the custodianship of its cultural heritage. In doing so, it proved to be the catalyst for what can be regarded as the beginning of the truly diasporic identity of its community.

When considering the nature of Kroondal as a diasporic settlement in the years following the end of the First World War, it is useful to refer back to the historian, Safran's definition of diaspora that was described in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Where it is possible to assert that Kroondal, as with other German settlements in South Africa, can be thought of as belonging to that which has often been called the general "German diaspora", the use of the 'diasporic' label is far more specific to the circumstances of each individual community. In this sense, the settlement of Kroondal certainly exhibited numerous features that would distinguish it as being diasporic from the outset of its founding in 1889, including aspects such as "dispersal from a common homeland", "a collective memory, myth and idealisation of the homeland" and "a strong ethnic group consciousness". However, it was the passage of time and events of the First World War, that drew these and other diasporic elements into their fullest expression. Specifically, the community's "troubled" experience with its "host society" during the First World War along with strong feelings of "empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries" formed what would become the further accentuation of its German identity in the years that followed.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ H. Behrens, *Ein Kroondaler*. (unpublished). p. 8.

⁶⁸ R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. 2008. p. 6.

It was from this position that the Kroondal German Days came to represent the most public form of the community's character that was immediately conspicuous in its attempt to associate itself with the development of Germanness abroad. Recording these sentiments in a commemorative publication or *Festschrift*, the Kroondal community's documentation of its festivities through the collection of newspaper articles and the transcription of speeches offers an invaluable resource with which to engage in this part of the community's history.⁶⁹ Of these, the first article that was published in relation to Kroondal's celebration was in the newly established German periodical, *Der Deutsch-Afrikaner* (The German-African), that had emerged as part of the German South African relief efforts to Germany after the war.⁷⁰ By the mid-1920s, such accounts of the Kroondal German Day were detailed enough to offer a clear indication of its community's emotions in the wake of the devastation in Europe. This is certainly evident from the events of the 1924 German Day that included a series of speeches, songs and recitals that all drew the crowd's attention to the sense of Germany's wounded national pride. These included patriotic anthems such as "*Ich habe mich ergeben*" (I have given myself), "*Nun ade, du mein lieb Heimatland!*" (Farewell now, my beloved homeland) and the singing of the old imperial national anthem as opposed to the new rendition that had been adopted under the new German Weimar Republic. Taken together with the recitals of poems such as "Versailles" and "*Der Deutschen Kinder-Kriegsgebet*" (The German children's wartime prayer), it provides an indication of the nostalgia that Kroondal felt towards the loss of the German *Kaiserreich* (Empire).⁷¹

In the years thereafter, the pattern of these celebrations essentially remained unchanged and while they also always included more light hearted events such as athletics and folk dancing, the loss of Germany's status in the world continued to be a focal point of its occasion.⁷² In doing so, it is interesting to note that the Germans of Kroondal continued to reject much of the Weimar Republic, choosing instead to fly the old imperial German flag well into the 1930s before this was replaced by the flag

⁶⁹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981.

⁷⁰ L. Kriel, "Heimat in the veld? German Afrikaners of missionary descent and their imaginings of women and home. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht). 41. 228-256. 2015 .p. 10.

⁷¹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 4-5.

⁷² H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 8-9, 65.

of National Socialist Germany in 1934.⁷³ It was a reaction that can be seen to have been born out of the Kroondal community's idealisation of pre-war Germany that had struggled to reconcile itself with the loss of the country's monarchical identity in 1918.⁷⁴ Therefore, stating its purpose as a means of "strengthening and sustaining" *Deutschtum* in the region, the Kroondal German Day represented a commitment to a specifically conservative ideal of Germanness that it believed to have been threatened in the light of recent circumstances in Europe. Standing at the centre of this movement was the figure of August Behrens who, as the celebration's host opened each of the German Days with a welcoming address. It was in one of the first of these addresses, in 1926, that August Behrens offers some succinct commentary on the purpose of its event:

Jedes Jahr ist es uns mehr zum Bewusstsein gekommen dass die Feier eines deutschen Tages für uns "Deutsch-Afrikaner" von grossem Nutzen und absolut notwendig ist...Wir leben hier ja in einem Lande mit einer sehr gemischten Bevölkerung, was zur Folge hat, dass wir sehr leicht unsere liebe deutsche Sprache, Sitten und Gefühle verlieren. Wir sind allerdings alle bestrebt, gute Bürger dieses unseres angenommenen Heimatlandes zu sein...Dieses darf uns aber nicht davon abhalten, unsere liebe deutsche Muttersprache, unsere deutschen Lieder und Sitten hoch zu halten und zu pflegen. Zur Förderung dieses Zieles sollen nun diese deutschen Tage dienen. Sie sollen uns anregen das zu halten was als Motto auf der ersten Seite unserer deutschen Zeitung steht, nämlich: "Gedenke, dass du ein Deutscher bist!".⁷⁵

Every year it becomes clearer to us "German-Africans", that the celebration of a German Day serves a great purpose and is absolutely necessary...We live in a country with a very diverse population, which could quite easily result in the loss of our beloved German language, customs and feelings. We have all endeavoured to be good citizens of this, our adopted *Heimatland* (homeland)... However, this should not prevent us from honouring and maintaining our beloved German mother-tongue along with our German songs and customs. It

⁷³ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 11, 13.

⁷⁴ A development that has also been alluded to by the historian, Gunther Schendel in the work, *Die Missionsanstalt Hermannsburg und der Nationalsozialismus*. (pp. 95-96), but not expanded upon at any great length.

⁷⁵ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 7.

is through the pursuit of these aspects that we will remain true to that which serves as the motto of our German newspaper, namely: “Remember that you are a German!”.

(Own translation)

While August Behrens’s words highlight the perceived importance of the community’s German heritage, it is his reference to the community’s dual identity as “German-Africans” that is of specific interest to this thesis. In particular, August Behrens’s affirmation of his wish to be both a good citizen of the land and a good German is telling in its distinction between what he regarded as two separate duties: the duty of civic responsibility and the duty of national allegiance. It is a distinction that would garner repeated attention over the course of subsequent German Days and that on this occasion (1926) was similarly advanced by the *Deutsch-Afrikaner* in its article of the event as follows:

*Die stärkste deutsche Kolonie im Transvaal, nicht allein an Seelenzahl, sondern auch an Wohlstand und guter deutscher Gesinnung, ist entschieden die zu Kroondal in der Nähe Rustenburgs...Diese Landsleute wissen noch zwischen Rassen- sowie Kulturgemeinschaft und Staatsangehörigkeit sehr wohl zu unterscheiden.*⁷⁶

The strongest German colony in the Transvaal, not only in numbers, but also in its prosperity and good German convictions, is without a doubt that of Kroondal in the vicinity of Rustenburg...These country folk still know very well to distinguish between racial, as well as cultural communities and citizenship.

(Own translation)

Among those also promoting such views were the ranks of German Lutheran pastors who besides Kroondal’s pastor and teacher Johannes von Zwierring, included the visiting pastor and guest speaker from Johannesburg, J. Herrmann who addressed the gathering in both 1929 and 1933. On the first of these occasions, Hermann exhorted his audience never to relinquish their connection to the “old *Heimat*”, reminding them that it was only as “good Germans” that they would be able to

⁷⁶ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 7.

contribute to the development of South Africa.⁷⁷ As for von Zwierring, his various addresses to the *Bergheim* crowds in 1928, 1933 and 1935 all delved into the question of civic versus national loyalties that he often specifically directed towards those who had been born in South Africa as on this occasion in 1933:

...Darf man es (wagen), in dieser Festversammlung von einer Liebe zur deutschen Heimat zu reden, da doch die meisten der Festbesucher hier in Südafrika geboren sind, nur der kleinere Teil in Deutschland geboren sind? Ich wage es und ich mache keinen Unterschied zwischen denen, deren Wiegen in Deutschland gestanden und denen, deren Wiegen in Südafrika gestanden haben. Deutschland ist unsere Heimat, Deutschland ist das Land unsere Väter...Deutschland darf für uns kein blosser geographischer Begriff sein... Nein, Deutschland...ist das Land mit dem wir durch die Bande des Blutes verbunden sind, mit dem wir in ständiger Schicksalsgemeinschaft vereinigt sind.⁷⁸

...Is one allowed to talk about a love for the German *Heimat* when most of the people at this gathering were born in South Africa and only a small minority were born in Germany? I will risk it and I make no distinction between those whose cradles stood in Germany and those whose cradles stood in South Africa. Germany is our homeland, Germany is the land of our fathers... Germany cannot simply be a geographical concept for us...No, Germany...is the land with which we are tied to by our blood, with whom we are bound as an inseparable community with a shared destiny.

(Own translation)

On each of these occasions, the merits of *Deutschtum* were invariably placed at the forefront of the day's events to the extent that the idealisation of its principles and those of its supposed virtues cannot but be regarded as having become central to the community's sense of identity. In contrast, those references that were made to the community's historic association to the HMS at these events were noticeably curtailed, and often only re-emphasised when members of the HMS were invited to give an address. The most prominent of these was once again, Pastor von Zwierring,

⁷⁷ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 10-11.

⁷⁸ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 65.

who remained steadfast in his efforts to weld these aspects of ethnic and national responsibility on the one hand together with the religious duty of the community's pious, Lutheran heritage on the other.⁷⁹ It was a role that he not only performed with utter conviction, but which he also managed to maintain over successive generations of Kroondal's community and, in so doing, can be credited as the single most important influence in shaping the nature of its identity.⁸⁰

Third Generation: Hugo & Richard Behrens

It was into the context of this setting of Kroondal as a community of heightened national and religious convictions that the children of Ida and Gussy Behrens began to take on their own roles in its society. Having grown to a total number of six children by 1931, the Behrens siblings (two boys and four girls) recall being raised in a loving though unquestionably strict family environment.⁸¹ With a strong emphasis on the practice of pious Christian principles in its family, diligence (*Fleiß*) was exemplified while falsehoods, dishonesty, disorder and quarrelling were heavily disciplined. As with other Kroondal families, religious convictions were taken very seriously and included prayers before and after meals as well as devotions or *Andachten* (prayers). On the whole, Sunday church services were seen as mandatory once a child had reached school going age with the afternoon services also used as its Sunday school or *Kinderlehre*. Here, Pastor von Zwiétring took pains to test his charges in the full presence of the congregation and the Behrens's eldest son, Hugo, recalls the embarrassment that a wrong answer could earn one in the full sight of the community: An indictment that was typically reinforced with a beating from the pastor in school the next morning.⁸²

For the Behrens children, growing up in the middle of the *Ortschaft* and only a few yards away from both church and school, the community of Kroondal represented the centre of their world in which they were surrounded by acquaintances on all sides. A little way further, and in the direction of the Magaliesberg, lay the properties of both their paternal and maternal grandparents where they would spend time over

⁷⁹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 14, 69-71.

⁸⁰ Personal information: H. Behrens, *Bernfels*, Kroondal, North West. 2007-11-29.

⁸¹ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 148; H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 4.

⁸² H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 4.

weekends visiting their extended families.⁸³ In the case of Ida's mother's family at *Wehrmannsruh*, the presence of their great grandmother Schlaphoff was said to be a matter of frequent torment for the children who were forced to memorise bible verses to satisfy the old matriarch's conviction of *Frommlichkeit* or religious piety.⁸⁴ It was a conviction that, nevertheless, found more than its equal in Pastor von Zwiétring who, having already taught and confirmed the children's parents, had ascended to a position of virtually unquestioned authority within the Kroondal community.⁸⁵ For the children, this meant memorising virtually the entire Lutheran small catechism along with countless Bible verses, stories, Psalms and Lutheran hymns. For the young Hugo Behrens, the extent of this influence was taken one step further given that the young boy also had the onerous privilege of having "Onkel" (as Pastor von Zwiétring preferred to be known) as his godfather. Consequently, and given the authoritative nature of these figures it was hardly surprising that Hugo Behrens soon became convinced that it was his duty to become a missionary, even though he struggled to reconcile himself to the thought.⁸⁶

Where the close contact with their extended family along with the unmitigated proximity of church and school had their firm influence upon the Behrens children, life in the family's *Rosenhof* home also proceeded according to its own distinctive pattern. As the family of the village shopkeeper, there was always work enough to occupy the children in performing small tasks for the family business. This even more so when in March 1930, their father moved the family's shop to a new building that he had had constructed adjacent to their home on the *Rosenhof* property.⁸⁷ Here the children were required to man the till as soon as they were tall enough to peer over the counter, a task that certainly required a reasonable proficiency in their arithmetic. Yet, in spite of the endless list of chores that the shop brought with it, it also served as a reasonably consistent source of income in comparison to the majority of the other Kroondal families. It was a distinction that became especially notable in 1929 when the downturn of the world's economy had its own drastic effect on the South African markets.⁸⁸ Spiralling into what became known as the Great

⁸³ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 148.

⁸⁴ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 5.

⁸⁵ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 149.

⁸⁶ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 3-4, 9.

⁸⁷ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 40.

⁸⁸ A. Minnaar, "The effects of the Great Depression (1929-1934) on South African White agriculture". *The South African Journal of Economic History*. vol. 5, no.2. 1990. pp. 83-84.

Depression, among those hardest hit were the region's farmers who, following the construction of the nearby Olifantsnek dam in 1926, had initially been able to increase their operations to include the farm's dry lands.⁸⁹ Therefore, when by 1931, two years of markedly below average rainfall were followed by an all-time low in 1932, the drought accentuated the hardships that had already been inflicted by the falling prices. In comparison, the Behrens store had the good fortune of being able to rely on its business with the mine to ensure that a steady flow of cash could be maintained,⁹⁰ even while the Kroondal shop languished under the growing debt of its farming clientele. It followed that even in the worst of these years, Gussy and Ida Behrens were in a position to be able to afford various items that were otherwise considered as luxuries among the rest of the community. These included the family's purchase of a Model T Ford in 1926 and a hot water system that was connected to the coal stove in the kitchen in 1930, thus providing the all but unheard of extravagance of warm water in the bathroom.⁹¹ This was followed by the acquisition of a radio by the mid-1930s that had to be connected to a car battery and which Hugo's younger brother, Richard, recalled as the source of such excitement that he could not fall asleep at night. Other than this, the family's love for music meant that much of their time together was spent singing that included regular visits from their Wehrmann relations for an evening of Lutheran hymns.⁹²

In each of these aspects, the Behrens family's awareness of its German heritage was continually reinforced by the structures of the generally insular Kroondal community. This was similarly the case when embarking on their family holidays that generally all made use of the connections with their relations in Natal. Given that these were likewise living in German farming communities such as Harburg and Braunschweig, it is notable that even the most distant of the family's acquaintances in South Africa only served to reinforce the German identity that they themselves espoused.⁹³ As for the children, their own connection to the world beyond Kroondal was carefully shepherded by von Zwiétring who, by the beginning of the 1930s, had

⁸⁹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 43; H. Behrens & I. Behrens. *Die Siedlung Kroondal. 100 Jahre 1889-1989. Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 4. November 1989.* 1989. pp. 26, 40.

⁹⁰ The Great Depression had a similar effect on the region's mining industry with general closures being the norm. However, Rosenthal (*Rustenburg Romance*:1979) notes that only the "Rustenburg Platinum Mines Ltd." remained operational, though operating at a reduced level.

⁹¹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 32, 34.

⁹² R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt.* H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 149.

⁹³ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 37.; H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 7.

instigated a writing exchange with a school in Germany with the stated purpose of directing the children's "thoughts and gaze" towards the "German Heimat".⁹⁴ Likewise a German youth group was begun in Kroondal in 1928 that based itself on the information that it could glean from the then popular and intensely nationalistic German youth magazine, *Der Gute Kamerad* (The good comrade).⁹⁵ Using the magazine's name as the basis for their own group and following the leadership of one of the settlement's older youths, Kroondal's *Gute Kamerad* embarked upon regular gatherings and outings that soon attracted the membership of most of the settlement's boys who were older than the required twelve year old age limit. By 1932, the youth group had established contact with the South West African German *Pfadfinder* (scouts) organisation with the result that they became an affiliated member of its movement by 1933.⁹⁶ Yet, it was also in that same year that the dynamics of German politics, both in Germany and abroad, would witness the beginnings of an indelible shift in its makeup when in January 1933, Adolf Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany.⁹⁷

Nazism

The advent of the Nazi state and its effects upon the German community of Kroondal represents a short though by no means insignificant segment in the history of the settlement. Coming on the back of Germany's demise at the end of the First World War, the inhabitants of Kroondal, as with many other populations of patriotic Germans elsewhere, were positioned in such a way that made them quite susceptible to the promise of a renewal of Germany's national pride.⁹⁸ However, for a boy such as Hugo Behrens who had been raised in a community that had not only accentuated the idealisation of its Germanness, but just as importantly, underscored the loss of its prestige from before the time of his birth, the impact of national socialism had an especially profound effect. Beginning with the 1933 Kroondal German Day, the first reports of the settlement's reception of the Nazi's rise to power portray a community enlivened at the prospect of a new and defiant era in Germany's political history. They were sentiments that Hugo's grandfather, August

⁹⁴ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 65.

⁹⁵ M. Muhl, (et al.), *Deutsche Jugend Kroondal 28-78*. Kroondal. 1978. p. 2-3.; A. Donson, "Models for Young German Nationalists and Militarists: German Youth Literature in the First World War". *German Studies Review*. Vol. 27. no. 3. 2004. p. 583.

⁹⁶ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 9.

⁹⁷ M. Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918 - 2014: The Divided Nation*. 2015. p. 57.

⁹⁸ K. O'Donnell, R. Bridenthal & N. Reagin, *The Heimat Abroad. The Boundaries of Germanness*. 2008. pp. 58-59, 67-68.

Behrens, acknowledged in his speech to that year's German Day guests on *Bergheim*, describing it as the means with which Germany would at last be able to "shake off the unworthy chains of slavery" that had repressed it ever since the World War.⁹⁹ With Pastor von Zwierting delivering his own address later that day, the enthusiasm for the new Nazi dispensation seems to have been universal so that by the end of the gathering, August Behrens's proposed that a telegram be sent to both the *Reichspräsident* (German President) Paul von Hindenburg and *Reichskanzler* (German Chancellor) Adolf Hitler as follows:

*700 Afrikadeutsche, versammelt zur Feier Deutschen Tages 31. Mai Bergheim-Kroondal-Transvaal senden ehrerbietigste Grüße und drücken ihre Freude aus über heutige Entwicklung und Anstieg im Vaterlande.*¹⁰⁰

700 Africa-Germans, gathered in celebration of a German Day 31 May, *Bergheim-Kroondal-Transvaal* send their respectful greetings and express their joy about the present developments and rise in the fatherland.
(Own translation)

After a final address to the gathering by the principal of the Johannesburg German School, who likewise drew the crowd's attention to the "man (Hitler) with his brown battalion" who had led the "greatest freedom movement in Germany's history", the German Day was reported to have ended with the crowd repeating the Nazi acknowledgement of "heil Hitler".¹⁰¹

In reading the accounts of these events, it is not difficult to imagine how these developments would have left a powerful impression upon the Behrens children whose oldest and most prominent members of their family (and community) had all been swept up in the enthusiasm of its occasion. This, it seems, for none more so than for Hugo Behrens who, at eleven years old in 1933, was eagerly awaiting his next birthday and with it the right to become part of the Kroondal *Pfadfinders*. As it happened, Hugo Behrens's entry into the *Pfadfinder* group a year later in 1934 occurred just as the group was being amalgamated with the newly established

⁹⁹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 14.

¹⁰⁰ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 15.

¹⁰¹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 15.

Deutsch Jugend Südafrikas (DJSA). Created by an expatriate German school teacher in Johannesburg, Heinrich Müller, the DJSA was a direct extrapolation of the Hitler Youth and *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls) movements in Germany. With it came the group's new magazine, *Die Brücke der Jugend* (The Bridge for the Youth), that printed its first copy in June 1934.¹⁰² In the introduction, Müller expands upon the group's purpose as a means of drawing South Africa's German youth into a closer affiliation to the German *Heimat*, but insists that the movement would endeavour to distance itself from any political affiliation, whether German or South African. It is a statement that is, however, soon watered down when Müller exhorts his followers that to be German is, above all, to be faithful to their racial heritage (*Deutsch sein heisst treu sein eurem Volk*) whereafter they were free to serve their "second" South African *Heimat*. And in ending his column, Müller is careful to draw attention to what he refers to as the "superhuman" (*übermenschliche*) efforts of Germany's new leader, Adolf Hitler.¹⁰³

Featuring directly after Müller's column (and after a short insert from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*), the first article in *Die Brücke* provides a report from the German *Pfadfinder* group in Kroondal where its leader (and Hugo Berhens's neighbour), Werner Backeberg, gives a proud account of his own group's history and their recent affiliation to what he simply calls the "Transvaal *Hitler Jugend*".¹⁰⁴ Interestingly, Backeberg's account spends most of its time addressing the question of conflicting national loyalties to which he insists that their duty is to be loyal citizens of South Africa, but that this can only be effective when they do so as good Germans.¹⁰⁵ It is a message that seems to echo the German Day *Festsansprachen* (speeches) and one in which Backeberg goes on to make the same distinctions between *Staatsangehörigkeit* (citizenship) and *Stammeszugehörigkeit* (racial membership).¹⁰⁶ However, in spite of these seemingly obvious ambiguities, the passage ends in a way that leaves no uncertainty as to the true nature of their preferred loyalties. In Backeberg's case, it is the new German banner that he regards as a "holy symbol" to

¹⁰² H. Müller (ed.), *Die Brücke: Monatsschrift für die Deutsche Jugend Südafrikas*. "Brachmond" 1934. pp. 1-3.

¹⁰³ H. Müller (ed.), *Die Brücke: Monatsschrift für die Deutsche Jugend Südafrikas*. "Brachmond" 1934. pp. 1-3.

¹⁰⁴ H. Müller (ed.), *Die Brücke: Monatsschrift für die Deutsche Jugend Südafrikas*. "Brachmond" 1934. pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁵ H. Müller (ed.), *Die Brücke: Monatsschrift für die Deutsche Jugend Südafrikas*. "Brachmond" 1934. p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 68-70, 75; H. Müller (ed.), *Die Brücke: Monatsschrift für die Deutsche Jugend Südafrikas*. "Brachmond" 1934. p. 4.

whose ideals he and his group will be willing to swear their allegiance and sacrifice everything for.¹⁰⁷

The effect of this statement by the leader of the Kroondal youth group is strong enough to raise an eyebrow, but stronger still when considering the context of the community from which it stemmed. As a deeply pious settlement, Kroondal's deep-seated allegiance to their German heritage can only be thought to be superseded by the community's devotion to their Lutheran faith, a belief that did not tolerate the elevation of secular ideologies above those of their religious ordinances. This was especially true for those of the older generation whose parents, in many if not most instances, had been rooted in the HMS. It is, therefore, worth noting that Backeberg's message also makes a short, though no less telling mention of the fact that his group's amalgamation into the DJSA was met with "unhappiness and mistrust" from various segments of the Kroondal community (*Obgleich uns dieser Schritt von verschiedenen Seiten Unzufriedenheit und Misstrauen entgegenbrachte...*).¹⁰⁸ While it must be assumed that the final sentence of Backeberg's message had not been edited by Müller to take on its intensely nationalistic slant, it is safe to assume that the nature of these words would likely have courted their fair share of concern among the older and more conservative members of the Kroondal congregation.

In general, the available documentation seems to suggest that the arrival of the new Nazi dispensation in 1933 wasted little time in making its presence felt among German communities in South Africa.¹⁰⁹ Of these, the community of Kroondal was certainly among the most prominent because of its relative proximity to the German populations of Pretoria and Johannesburg, and not least because of the attention that it had already garnered through the arrangement of its annual German Day festivities. Among those taking note of these developments was Pastor von Zwierring, whose references to these developments in his annual report for 1934, captures some insight into these events from his perspective:

Die von Adolf Hitler in Deutschland durchgeführte nationale Bewegung und Erhebung des Deutschen Volkes hat auch in Fühlbarer und Kräftiger Gestalt

¹⁰⁷ H. Müller (ed.), *Die Brücke: Monatsschrift für die Deutsche Jugend Südafrikas*. "Brachmond" 1934. p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ Kroondal Library Archive. H. Müller, *Die Brücke der Jugend*. no. 1. June, 1934. p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ P. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*. 1991. pp. 74-75.

*ihre Wellen nach Kroondal geschlagen. Eine Flut von Büchern, Zeitungen, gedruckten Reden, illustr. Blättern ergoß sich über unsern Ort und Kreis. Vorträge wurden gehalten. Der Deutsche Tag in Berheim - 31 Mai - stand im Zeichen der neuen Zeit.*¹¹⁰

In Germany, the realisation of Adolf Hitler's national movement and the upliftment of the German people also resulted in some of its tangible and powerful effects finding their way to Kroondal. A flood of books, newspapers, printed speeches, illustrated pamphlets poured into our settlement and its surrounding community. Presentations were given. The German Day on *Bergheim* - 31 May - stood under the sign of these new times. (Own translation)

In his report, von Zwiétring goes on to list the range of new terminologies with which the children in the Kroondal school needed to familiarise themselves. These included terms such as "*Kampf gegen die Arbeitslosigkeit*" (fight against unemployment), *Winterhülfe* (Winter Aid) and *Eintopfgericht* or "one-pot-meal" that required German families to cook a casserole instead of a roast one Sunday each month and give the proceeds from what they saved to the *Winterhülfe*.¹¹¹ But, by far the most important term that began to come into use was *Volksgemeinschaft*, or folk community that placed its firm emphasis upon the notions of racial heritage. Although von Zwiétring seems to have welcomed these and other similar additions to his ideals of German patriotism, his perception of the Nazi party members who descended onto Kroondal were not nearly as favourable. In particular, it seems the ageing pastor took exception to the manner in which the majority of these newly arriving national socialists failed to acknowledge the years of work that he in particular had dedicated to the maintenance of the settlement's German character. Yet, in most other respects, the Nazi's emphasis on racial awareness only appears to have strengthened some of von Zwiétring's more conservative dictums and his report slates the increasing incidences of *Mischheiraten* (mixed marriages) and *Verlobungen* (engagements) that were beginning to take place in the Kroondal community. In doing so, von Zwiétring bemoans the fact that "some of the sons from (Kroondal's) best German families" had chosen to marry Afrikaans and English women instead of bringing German women back to the "German Kroondal". It was a

¹¹⁰ Kroondal Library Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 33.

¹¹¹ Kroondal Library Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 33.

trend that he warned created a “strong barrier” to the maintenance of *Deutschtum* if not in fact the potential for its eventual demise.¹¹²

As Kroondal’s adult community were becoming accustomed to the influences of the new Nazi state, the settlement’s children were soon eager participants in the DJSA that held regular regional gatherings in Pretoria and Johannesburg. Taking part in these events, Hugo Behrens remembers the accentuated emphasis that was placed on order and discipline and the general enthusiasm that was felt towards everything that was German. Over the next years, these gatherings grew to include an excursion to Catembe on the outskirts of Lourenco Marques during the 1936 winter school holidays that his sisters, Alma and Irma were allowed to attend. When the trip was repeated two years later, Hugo and his brother Richard were allowed to join in where they accompanied other members from the DJSA from as far afield as Cape Town and East London. As before, the camps were set according to a strict regimen with marching, singing and a visit to some of the German steam liners in the harbour counting as among the typical activities.¹¹³ Back in Kroondal, the newly uniformed and drilled youth group served to add a new dimension to the annual German Days when they took to parading at its event - a development that was excitedly recorded by the *Deutsch-Afrikaner* newspaper in 1934. However, it was a report that also began to show the marked influence of national socialist party views that would from then onwards begin to characterise its publication as one of the principle organs of Nazi propaganda in South Africa.¹¹⁴ In doing so the paper aimed to court German expatriates in order to form a loyal corps of so-called *Auslandsdeutsche* (Germans abroad) who the Nazi Party envisaged as part of a greater German *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹¹⁵ It was a form of acknowledgement that for many in Kroondal’s community, seems to have been the long wished for recognition of their dutiful efforts to maintain their German heritage.¹¹⁶ Indeed, taken together with the Nazi’s romanticised emphasis of the virtues of a farming lifestyle (as was reiterated in the

¹¹² Kroondal Library Archive. J. v. Zwietring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 33.

¹¹³ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). p. 10.

¹¹⁴ P. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*. 1991. p. 74.

¹¹⁵ A. Hagemann, *Südafrika und das Dritte Reich*. 1989. pp. 80-84; H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 15, 17, 68.

¹¹⁶ Kroondal Library Archive. J. v. Zwietring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 33.

German Day speeches in 1934) the community of Kroondal seems to have revelled in its new endorsement.¹¹⁷

With the return of good rainfall in Kroondal by the end of 1934 and with it the first signs of a gradual easing of the depression, the improved economic prosperity of the settlement seemed to contribute towards the generally buoyant mood that had begun to influence its politics.¹¹⁸ However, even as publications such as the *Deutsch-Afrikaner* became emboldened in their call for German South Africans to show loyalty towards the Nazi state, the unmistakable signs of tensions within these communities were, nevertheless, also beginning to show. These included joking references to the “sudden increase in aspirant *Führer* candidates”¹¹⁹ who, in jostling for positions of authority, had been stepping on the toes of many in these German South African communities (as the earlier example of Pastor von Zwietring’s annoyance illustrates). Yet, most of all, it is the increasingly frequent and at times chiding call for unity among the German community in South Africa that provides a clear indication that the introduction of Nazism was not welcomed by all in its society. In addressing these concerns, some of the German Day’s speakers admonished the movement’s “critics” who they claimed were merely being loath to follow the “good example of those in the *Heimat*” and that their failure to do so was detrimental to the “fatherland”.¹²⁰ Others, who had recently travelled to Germany, tried to instil their audience with a sense of awe regarding events there. Among these, the 1938 speaker, Dr Schulenburg, directed his comments specifically at the youth, instructing them that all “German-Africans” should make at least one journey to the *Heimat* to witness one of the mass rallies that were taking place there.¹²¹

Among those who did travel back to Germany during this time, but who returned with anything but a sense of pride or wellbeing, was the HMS Missionary Heinrich Behrens whose diary entries have already been discussed as part of this thesis’s investigation of Kroondal during the First World War. Having been called back to Hermannsburg for a mission’s conference in 1935, the then sixty-eight-year-old

¹¹⁷ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 17.

¹¹⁸ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 43.

¹¹⁹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 68.

¹²⁰ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 68-69.

¹²¹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 74.

missionary was able to reacquaint himself with the country that he had left behind almost thirty-seven years before. In doing so, he continued writing his diary in which he was able to record his impressions of the Nazi regime and in which one of his first observations upon arriving in Hermannsburg was the fact that its people were afraid to speak their thoughts freely.¹²² It was a concern that he continued to express in the months that followed but that was soon also joined by a variety of other troubling observations. Of these, the first occurred when overhearing a talk that was being given to a group of Hitler Youth who were camping in the vicinity and who he lamented were being drawn away from the church and into an overtly “volkish” and “racial” worldview; even if in his very next sentence, he also notes that he had difficulties in changing trains the following day, owing to the absence of any Black porters to be able to handle his baggage.¹²³

As Missionary Behrens’s stay in Germany wore on, he certainly also recorded the various benefits that had been wrought by the new state. Everywhere, he noted, people were working and the vast numbers of unemployed had already been drastically reduced. Farms were well cultivated and the youth were being made to provide community services. But, all the while, his sense of foreboding was never far away and he was left wondering about the state’s new policies of (eugenic) sterilisation and the way that the government’s reach was extending into areas that he believed they had no business to.¹²⁴ (*das Nazitum sucht mit aller Macht alles zu uniformieren und zu sich herüber zu ziehen...es tut und macht Übergriffe in Gebiete, die ihm nicht gehören.*).¹²⁵ Undoubtedly the most important of these for the missionary was the state’s increasingly restrictive policies towards the Christian church and he recoiled at the news that the Old Testament was now generally being viewed as too Jewish and, therefore, no longer deemed appropriate to be used as part of “God’s word”.¹²⁶ Likewise, other instances of crude anti-Semitism are mentioned in his diary along with what he noted as the beginnings of a new paganism in which increasing numbers of Germans were beginning to view Christianity as an “unsuitable religion for Nordic people” - this given that there were no heroes to espouse, only lesser individuals (*minderwertige Leute*) who ascribe to

¹²² N. Behrens, (ed.), “Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940”. pp. 230, 239.

¹²³ N. Behrens, (ed.), “Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940”. p. 240.

¹²⁴ N. Behrens, (ed.), “Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940”. pp. 261-262, 264.

¹²⁵ N. Behrens, (ed.), “Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940”. p. 263.

¹²⁶ N. Behrens, (ed.), “Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940”. p. 253.

notions of forgiveness.¹²⁷ Mourning these trends and noting that “even in Africa, criticism of the government was allowed”, the missionary’s words carry an apt sense of foresight, as illustrated in the following phrase:

*Rasse - Blut und Ehre. Das sind die Götzen hier. Und die leitenden Männer wärmen alten Kohl wieder auf, etwa nur der Topf ist (anders). Wohin will es gehen? ...Diese Leute bringen unser Volk ins Unglück.*¹²⁸

Race - Blood and honour. These are the gods here. And the men in charge are “warming up old cabbage”, only the pot is different. Where will this lead?... These people are bringing our *Volk* into misfortune. (Own translation)

Returning from Germany in November, 1935, Missionary Behrens was thus invited to address the *Bergheim* crowds as part of the 1936 Kroondal German Day. Tellingly, his speech seems to have avoided any more obvious indications of the misgivings that filled his diary and he chose instead to entertain his audience with humorous anecdotes of his visit, including an attempt to recreate the gesticulations that he had observed Hitler make during one of the public addresses that he had witnessed.¹²⁹ Even so, ending his speech, the old missionary circumvented the notion of nationalism by choosing to reiterate the primacy of the HMS as the community’s most valuable connection to their German heritage.

Among those listening to the missionary’s words and contrasting them to the “monotonous” and soporiferous (*einschlafänder, monotoner Weise*) address by the previous speaker and Reich’s representative, Dr. Weyrauch, was the editor of the alternative German language newspaper, *Deutsche Afrika-Post*, Mr. Lothar Kunze. As a previous correspondent for the *Deutsch Afrikaner* (until 1929), and an initial supporter of National Socialism, Kunze had eventually distanced himself from the Nazi movement so that by 1936 his newspaper had taken up an increasingly vociferous stance against its proponents in South Africa.¹³⁰ The result was that at the 1937 German Day, these differences led to a confrontation between Kunze and a

¹²⁷ N. Behrens, (ed.), “Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940”. p. 270.

¹²⁸ N. Behrens, (ed.), “Das Tagebuch des Missionaren Heinrich Behrens 1885-1940”. pp. 244.

¹²⁹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 74.

¹³⁰ L. Kriel, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Zeitschrift für Historische Sozialwissenschaft*. “Germans and Afrikaners in South Africa”. April-Juni, 2015. pp. 236-240.

number of Nazi Party members whereafter Kunze defiantly penned the following in his column:

*In den letzten vier Jahren hat sich das Bild dieses deutschen Tages leider stark verändert. Während früher die altberühmte Gemütlichkeit herrschte...ist jetzt eine gewisse Spannung eingetreten. Das hängt mit der gänzlich unangebrachten Nazi-Propaganda zusammen.*¹³¹

Over the course of the last four years, the nature of this German Day has unfortunately been markedly changed. Where in the past, a renowned sense of pleasantness presided...a degree of tension has now made its appearance. This is due to the unnecessary influence of the Nazi propaganda.
(Own translation)

Going on to liken the Kroondal gathering as one that had begun to resemble those in Nuremberg, Germany, Kunze bemoaned the fact that everything in the day's events now "stood under the sign of Nazism".¹³² Likewise, Kunze also argued that many of the older South African Germans no longer came to the event or alternatively, chose not to gather for the speeches that were held throughout the day.¹³³ While it seems that some of these concerns were heeded when in 1938 and 1939 the Nazi influence was noticeably reduced at the Kroondal German Days, it is far more likely that the growing tensions and suspicion towards Nazism in Europe (and South Africa) played the greatest part in having this effect.¹³⁴ It was a climate in which the threat of war was again beginning to loom upon the horizon, and in which the Behrens family of Kroondal would once again be required to reconcile the idealisation of their Germanness with the reality of their circumstances in South Africa.

The advent of Nazism in Kroondal, that will continue to be discussed in the next chapter, was to play an important part in the self-perception of its community. Coming on the back of a resurgent and generally defiant German nationalism after the First World War, the community of Kroondal, as with many other German

¹³¹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 19-20.

¹³² H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 19-20.

¹³³ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 19-20.

¹³⁴ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 21-22.

community's around the world, was ideally positioned to fall prey to the promise of what national socialism seemed to offer,¹³⁵ namely, the restoration of the German national pride and a sense of inclusivity based upon the German cultural and ethnic heritage that they held so dear. It was a susceptibility that was enhanced by the idealisation of Germanness that the older generation had sought to instil in the ranks of its descendants. These, who had never seen Germany were, therefore, markedly ill prepared to be able to discern between the potential virtues of their diasporic identity and the dangers of its exploitation as part of the Nazi ideal. For the most part, the sense of duty that they had come to equate as part of an expatriate notion of Germanness strove to be recognised as being "more German than the Germans"¹³⁶ and, therefore, also worthy of an identity to which geography, local customs and above all, citizenship, were no longer compatible to their natural identification as being German.

Of course, the arrival of Nazism in Kroondal was not simply welcomed by all those among its community and for many of its older generation, the hyper-nationalistic and moreover, overtly racialised politics proved to be irreconcilable with the pious, Christian Lutheran tradition of the HMS. However, in stating this, it is important to recognise that both the nature and the extent of this opposition varied significantly so that the acceptance of Nazism by the German community in South Africa should be regarded as a matter of degree, rather than a simply dualistic phenomenon. Accordingly, while some members of its community began to express their disquiet at the Nazi penchant for political and social control, the movement's strongly anti-communist, anti-liberal and anti-democratic world views were not dissimilar to those that had long characterised the HMS. Here too, the HMS's acceptance of an increasingly conservative and racially distinct framework for its operations in South Africa provided a sufficiently familiar context for many of its missionaries to support the Nazi state, even if they held concerns regarding the generally anti-Christian tendencies of its governance.¹³⁷ For the most part, however, the Nazi's recognition of Kroondal as part of a global network of *Auslandsdeutsche*, served as a powerful source of affirmation regarding the sense of purpose and identity that its community desired. Therefore, situated far enough from the realities of life and restrictions in Nazi Germany, the rise of national socialism proved to be an important influence on the next generation of Kroondal's descendants.

¹³⁵ G. Gremels (ed.), *die Hermannsburg Mission und das "Dritte Reich"*. Münster. 2005. p. 23.

¹³⁶ Personal information: H. Behrens, *Bernfels*, Kroondal, North West. 2007-11-29.

¹³⁷ G. Gremels (ed.), *die Hermannsburg Mission und das "Dritte Reich"*. Münster. 2005. pp. 23, 84.

Chapter 6 *Solidarität - Solidarity* 1939-1945

On 1 September, 1939, the outdated German battleship, *Schleswig-Holstein*, fired the first shots of the Second World War when it commenced a surprise bombardment of the Polish garrison at Gdansk in the early hours of that morning.¹ It was an attack that would have made its own particular impression upon the inhabitants of Kroondal given that a detachment of the same warship's crew had visited the Kroondal community in January of the preceding year,² thus lending the settlement a small, personal connection to the dramatic events that were then underway in Europe.³ Among those following these events was the family of Ida and Gussy Behrens who, unlike most others in Kroondal, were able to listen to the news of the war via the German short wave radio broadcast that was transmitted from Zeesen in Eastern Germany.⁴ It was a service that had been in operation since the late 1920s but which had become a useful source of Nazi propaganda following Hitler's rise to power in 1933.⁵ By 1939, these broadcasts featured carefully edited news and pro-Nazi commentary in up to eighteen different languages, including Afrikaans, that made it into a prominent feature in the homes of those South Africans harbouring anti-British or pro-German sentiments.⁶ As for the Behrens family, the influence of this German wireless service would become a key aspect of their experience of the war as it allowed them to receive daily updates of the events in Europe directly from the Nazi perspective.⁷ Naturally, the Zeesen presenters did their utmost to offer only the most favourable view of the German cause, taking pains to insist that Hitler only desired peace and that the conflict was merely the result of "British-Jewish" attempts at maintaining Germany's subjugation in the wake of the First World War.⁸

¹ R. Farley, *The Battleship Book*. 2016. pp. 19-22.

² Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwietring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 39.

³ The arrival of the German sailors in Kroondal was given some coverage in the Rand Daily Mail on 17 January 1938 in which the crew were said to have been "impressed by the success of their German compatriots" and to have "expressed surprise at the extent to which German traditions and culture" had been maintained in the settlement. "German Sailors Entertained at Pretoria". *Rand Daily Mail*. 17 January 1938. p. 13.

⁴ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 21.

⁵ G. Malanowsky, *The Race for Wireless*. 2011. p. 57.

⁶ C. Marx, "'Dear Listeners in South Africa': German Propaganda Broadcasts to South Africa, 1939-1941". *South African Historical Journal*. (27). 1992. pp. 148-149.

⁷ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 49.

⁸ C. Marx, "'Dear Listeners in South Africa': German Propaganda Broadcasts to South Africa, 1939-1941". *South African Historical Journal*. (27). 1992. pp. 153, 162.

While the influence of such targeted propaganda on a population such as Kroondal cannot be overstated, it was by no means the only source of pro-German rhetoric in the Union at that time. Indeed, drawing upon the lingering animosity felt by many Afrikaners towards South Africa's position as a British dominion, significant factions within the Union government had become strongly opposed to the prospect of South Africa's participation in another war against Germany. Tellingly, the most prominent of these individuals was none other than the Union Prime Minister, J. B. M. Hertzog, who advocated that Germany's territorial aspirations were nothing more than a self-limiting response to the legacy of the Versailles Treaty. Opposing this view was Hertzog's deputy and former Union prime minister, Jan Smuts, who argued that Hitler's ambitions were not merely confined to the German territories in Europe, but had been revealed as having the aspirations of world domination. For Smuts, this meant that any further failure to check the tide of German expansionism might well necessitate the return of the former German colony of South West Africa, a prospect that would leave the Union with an aggressive Nazi Germany on its doorstep.⁹ They were deliberations that reached their peak when Britain declared war on Germany on 3 September whereupon the South African parliament rushed to put Hertzog's motion of neutrality to a vote. Defeated by 80 votes to 67, Hertzog duly resigned as prime minister leaving Smuts to take over the reins of government and with it, sufficient consensus to declare the Union at war against Germany on 6 September.¹⁰

Following these deliberations of the South African parliament was the seventeen-year-old Hugo Behrens, who, along with the rest of his family, was thoroughly partisan in his support of the German state. Raised in the mould of Kroondal's 'expatriatism', it had not taken long for Hugo to embrace the influence of national socialism that had begun during the formative years of his adolescence. In doing so, his enthusiasm towards the Nazi ideals seemed natural enough given that the young man had grown up in an environment in which everyone, from the community's pastor, to his grandfather, had gone to great lengths to espouse the idealisations of their Germanness. For Hugo, this had translated into a propensity to believe that everything originating from Germany was superior (*Außerdem himmelte ich alles an was Deutsch war*)¹¹ and that his duty lay in responding to the Nazi call to unite those

⁹ B. Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*. p. 56; A. Vandenbosch, *South Africa and the World: The Foreign Policy of Apartheid*. 1970. p. 102.

¹⁰ B. Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945*. p. 56.

¹¹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 27.

German immigrants living abroad.¹² It followed that as Hugo began to reach the end of his schooling in 1939, he had nurtured the dream of being able to live under a German colonial government in Africa,¹³ an idea that was given sufficient credence by the fact that the Union parliament itself was voicing its concerns at the prospect of Germany's reacquisition of its former colonies.

Therefore, it was with the prospect of what many in Kroondal considered to be the beginning of a new and exciting era that Hugo Behrens followed the initial triumphs of the German *Wehrmacht* and eagerly awaited the news of an overall German victory.¹⁴ In the meantime, due to the fact that South Africa had declared war against Germany, the community of Kroondal was, once again, forced to take the necessary precautions in order to appear as non-partisan as possible. Accordingly, the organising committee for the Kroondal German Day agreed that it would be imprudent to proceed with the arrangements for the 1940 German Day, much to the dismay of its seventy six year old founder, August Behrens, who believed that as South African citizens they should still have the right to do so.¹⁵ In the same fashion, other, obviously nationalistic pro-German institutions such as the Kroondal youth groups were suspended for the duration of the conflict in order to avoid garnering any unwanted attention. Nevertheless, Hugo recalls that Kroondal was placed under the watch of the South African Police who made occasional visits to the settlement to monitor activities there.¹⁶ On one such occasion, Hugo's younger brother Richard, remembers the unexpected visit of a detective from Rustenburg who came knocking one evening just as the Behrens family were gathered to listen to the daily Radio Zeesen broadcast.¹⁷ While no further actions against the family were taken, it was enough to place the community on its toes, which may well have been the detective's intention to begin with. However, this did not stop the Behrens family from continuing their nightly vigil around the radio that included counting the Zeesen bell

¹² "Wir waren die verlorenen Kinder die gesammelt und zusammengeschlossen werden sollten." / "We were the lost children who were meant to be gathered and unified" (own translation). H. Behrens, *Ein Kroondaler*. (unpublished). p. 10.

¹³ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 10.

¹⁴ "Wir glaubten fest, daß Hitler den Krieg sehr bald gewinnen und daß für die Welt ein goldenes Zeitalter beginnen würde." / "We firmly believed that Hitler would soon win the war and that a new golden era would begin for the world." (own translation).

H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 10.

¹⁵ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 22.

¹⁶ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 20.

¹⁷ Personal information: H. Behrens, *Bernfels*, Kroondal, North West. 2014-08-28.

chime that was meant to represent the daily number of allied ships that had been sunk.¹⁸

Where Hugo Behrens had become a firm supporter of Nazi Germany by the time of the Second World War, it must be noted that it was an enthusiasm that was not necessarily shared by all of Kroondal's inhabitants. Interestingly, it seems that the community's pastor, Johannes von Zwierring, can probably be counted as being among one of those who by 1939, viewed the national socialist state with less than favourable eyes. It is an observation that is largely based upon von Zwierring's *Jahresberichte* (annual reports) that were already mentioned in the previous chapter where they expressed the pastor's annoyance at the behaviour of visiting Nazi party members in 1934. They are emotions that seem to have been reiterated by the pastor in his report for 1935 where he expressed his satisfaction that their dealings with the German state would no longer have to be associated with the Nazi Party's *Auslandsorganisation*, but rather solely through the *Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland* (VDA),¹⁹ a pre-Nazi organisation, even if it had been appropriated by the Nazi state after 1933.²⁰ It was a development that the Pastor noted, had served to spare Kroondal from further unwanted attention by the "Nazi groups" that were based in Johannesburg.²¹ Then, beginning in 1936, the pastor's reports make no further mention of Nazi activity or policies other than the brief reference to the crew of the *Schleswig-Holstein* who visited the settlement on 16 January 1938. Here, as in other similar instances, von Zwierring couldn't resist expressing his ire at the influx of "unwanted and demanding guests", especially those from Johannesburg (*ungebetene und aufdringliche Gäste von auswärts, besonders Johannesburg*) who used the occasion to make their presence felt in Kroondal.²² However, other than these few references, von Zwierring left little else with which to discern his true feelings towards Nazism except the fact that in 1936, after thirty years of unbroken service to the community, he declined the congregation's gift of a journey home to

¹⁸ Personal information: H. Behrens, *Bernfels*, Kroondal, North West. 2007-11-29; H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 21.

¹⁹ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwierring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 35.

²⁰ H. A. Jacobsen, et al. *The Nazi Party and the German Foreign Office*. 2007. p. 36.

²¹ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwierring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 35.

²² Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwierring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 39.

visit his former homeland - a refusal for which he gave no indication as to his reasons.²³

If it seems likely that Pastor von Zwiétring harboured the misgivings of a clergyman in the face of Nazism's often anti-clerical and generally anti-Christian bent, then it was an ideological conflict that appears to have been of far less concern (or at least seemingly less obvious) to much of the rest of Kroondal's population. For many, the enthusiasm of being made to feel part of Germany's new era along with the initially glowing reports of Hitler's supposed accomplishments was enough to draw them into what, at times, was described as the near fanatical support of the German national socialist doctrine.²⁴ It followed that numerous Kroondalers joined the local branch of the South African Nazi Party (South African Gentile National Socialist Movement) or 'Greyshirts' as they were also known, that had been begun in Cape Town by a German South African named Louis Weichardt in 1933.²⁵ As a movement that had been inspired by Hitler's fascist ideology and having adopted the swastika as its emblem, the Greyshirts similarly adopted the Nazi's fervent anti-Semitism that pitted itself against what it imagined as the pervasive influence of Jewish communities in South Africa.²⁶ It is a topic that is obviously uncomfortable for the Kroondal community (today) and for which there is very little actual information to be had from any of the community's sources.

In those few instances where a reference to German-Jewish interaction can be found, it is typically vague enough so as to cast doubt as to the extent to which anti-Jewish sentiments were a widespread feature of life in Kroondal at this time. Yet, there is also just enough evidence (mainly from later years) to allow one to confirm that, to some extent at least, these prejudices certainly did exist.²⁷ Either way, given that Weichardt's Greyshirt movement had found a reasonable following among members of the Kroondal community (the exact numbers have not been established), it is quite feasible to assume that anti-Semitism was indeed commonplace among certain segments of Kroondal's population, even if it was not

²³ T. Wenhold (et al.), *75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein*. 1979. p. 39.

²⁴ Personal information: H. Behrens, *Bernfels*, Kroondal, North West. 2007-11-29.

²⁵ P. Furlong, *National Socialism, the National Party and the radical Right in South Africa, 1934-1948*. 1987. pp. 116-117.

²⁶ M. Shain, "Anti-Semitism and South African Society". *South African Historical Journal*. (27) 1992. p. 190.

²⁷ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 114; August (Gussy) Behrens, letter to Children, 1951-07-02.

explicitly recorded as such. As for the Behrens family, the only direct reference to their contact with Jews during this period comes from Gussy Behrens's decision to sell his shop at the platinum mine to the "Jews" Wolpe and Mendelsohn in 1936. A transaction that Gussy simply notes was paid out to the book value of the store, along with an additional two thousand pounds that was estimated as part of its goodwill impairment.²⁸

While most of the available resources on Kroondal's experience of the Second World War remain vague if not entirely nondescript regarding the community's overall perception of this period, the collection of Behrens family material that includes the unpublished autobiography of Hugo Behrens, along with an extensive collection of correspondence between Richard Behrens and his mother, Ida (beginning in 1944), offer an unusual depth of insight into some of the community's emotions during this time. It is from the basis of these primary source materials that this chapter explores the dynamics of life within the broader context of the Kroondal community that will extend into the first years of the Apartheid era. Beginning with the story of Hugo Behrens at the end of his schooling in 1940, the initial period between 1940 and 1943 is primarily based upon Hugo's autobiography. Here it should be noted that even though the autobiography was compiled more than sixty years after these events had taken place, the manuscript includes segments from a diary that he began to record at intervals during this time. While the diary itself was not made available for the purposes of this study, there is no reason to suspect that these segments offer anything other than the unedited transcripts of his original diary entries. Certainly, both these extracts and Hugo's reminiscences display a willingness to document his experiences of this era in candid detail, a willingness that cannot be regarded as being the norm for most of his peers.

Hugo Behrens - A "German" occupation

It is with this context in mind that the narrative of Hugo's life as a young adult begins with his matriculation from the Rustenburg High School in 1940, an institution that he had attended following the completion of his standard six (Grade 8) at the Kroondal school in 1936.²⁹ Coming at a time of significant uncertainty in South African politics, principally due to the strongly divided public opinion on South Africa's entry into the war, the government had been savvy enough to decide against any attempts to

²⁸ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 45.

²⁹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 11.

enforce military conscription. Consequently, enlistment into the Union Defence Force was on a strictly voluntary basis, thus leaving Hugo exempt from having to participate in the conflict and thereby free to ponder the direction of his life's vocation.³⁰ It was a decision that, other than his immediate enthusiasm to become a member of the Greyshirt movement, left him in a quandary, that prompted his father, Gussy, to propose a period of work in the family shop until he had settled upon a suitable occupation.³¹ It was towards the end of this time in 1942, that Hugo recorded these deliberations in his diary, revealing some of the elements to which he felt himself bound, including his long standing struggle with the belief that it was his duty to become a missionary.

...Mit 14 Jahren habe ich sehr oft gedacht: "Welch eine unschöne und schwere Arbeit ein Missionar doch hat." ...Schon vorher hatte ich einmal meine Mutter gefragt: "Wer wird Missionar?" Sie hat mir geantwortet: "Ein Missionar muß sich von Gott dazu berufen fühlen." Aber wie fühlt man das? Alle diese Gedanken verdrängte ich anfangs, aber was half mir das! Immer deutlicher schien es mir zu werden: "Du mußt Missionar werden." Ich sträubte mich dagegen, aber das machte die Stimme in mir nur noch lauter.³²

...At fourteen I often thought to myself, "what an unpleasant and hard occupation it is to be a missionary" ...At a young(er) age I had already asked my mother: "Who becomes a missionary?" She answered: "A missionary must feel himself called by God." But how does one feel that? Initially I suppressed all of these thoughts but that did not help me! It only seemed to become clearer to me: "You have to become a missionary." I kicked against it, but the voice only became louder. (Own translation)

However, (as the diary entry goes on to explain) after two years out of school, his lingering aversion to the idea of life as a missionary together with the personal doubts of his convictions as a Christian, eventually prompted Hugo to reconcile himself to the fact that the mission would not be his calling.³³ Nevertheless, both the length and the earnestness of his deliberations highlight the influence that the HMS's legacy had managed to exert upon this generation of the Kroondal community.

³⁰ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 20.

³¹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 16-17, 20.

³² H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 19.

³³ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 10, 19.

Therefore, having put these expectations to bed, and having asked God's forgiveness for the lack of his Christian convictions, Hugo next turned his attention to the only two options that he then believed lay open to him, namely, to follow his father's occupation as a salesman and shopkeeper or to pursue life as a farmer.³⁴ It is here that his belief in the prospect of national socialism begins to come to the fore as was recorded in his diary on 2 December 1942:

Mir stehen noch zwei Wege offen: Geschäftsmann oder Bauer. Im nächsten Jahr soll ich meine finale Berufsausbildung empfangen. Darum muß ich mich jetzt entschließen. Bauer ist ein schöner, ein edler Beruf... edel ist es Brot aus der Erde zu bringen womit du deine Familie, aber auch das Volk ernähren kannst...Dagegen Geschäftsmann ist, wie er vielfach betrieben wird, ein unschöner, unedler Beruf. Damit will ich nicht meines Vaters Arbeit verächtlich machen. Nein, ich habe große Achtung vor meinem Vater und seinem Tun. Er hat Großes geleistet. Aber im allgemein, wie der Beruf hier in diesem Land mißbraucht wurde, ist er nicht edel. Aber zum Glück, wird das im zukünftige national-sozialistischen Staat anders werden. Auch dieser Beruf muß ein dem Volk dienender sein, denn das ist er doch auch. - Was soll ich tun? Es ist unsere Pflicht das Erbe unserer Väter hochzuhalten. Doch eines steht fest: Wenn wir Deutschen dieses Land wo unser Deutschtum langsamerhand verschwindet, verlassen werden, um uns auf deutscher Erde zu festigen, damit wir Deutsche deutsch bleiben, dann sage ich dem Titel "Geschäftsmann" Lebewohl und werde Bauer.³⁵

Now there are two paths open to me: Shopkeeper or farmer. Next year I am supposed to enter into my final vocational training. That is why I now have to make this choice. Farming is a nice, noble occupation...it is noble to draw bread out of the ground with which to nourish one's family and one's people (*volk*)... In contrast, shopkeeping is an unattractive and ignoble pursuit, at least the way that it has been practiced. In saying this I don't want to belittle my father's work. No, I have great respect for my father and what he does. He has achieved much. But in general, the way that this occupation is misused in this country makes it ignoble. But luckily that will change under the future national socialistic government. Even this profession must be used in the service of the

³⁴ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 19.

³⁵ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 19.

people, because that is also what it is. - What should I do? It is our duty to maintain that which we have inherited from our fathers. Still, one thing is certain: If we Germans were to leave this land in which our Germanness is slowly receding, and were instead to settle on German (colonial) soil, to ensure that we Germans remain German, then I will bid the title “shopkeeper” good bye and become a farmer. (Own Translation)

It is from these diary entries, written by Hugo at the age of twenty, that one begins to sense just how central the notion of duty had become to the young man as he wrestled with what he believed was expected of him as a Kroondaler, and therefore too, what he believed it meant to be a German. Equally interesting is to take note of how the settlement’s tradition of Christian piety had weighed so heavily upon him to the extent that he had believed himself bound to pursue the life of a missionary, to which the only agreeable exit was to disqualify himself on the grounds that his tortured deliberations were a sign of his wavering faith. Yet, no sooner had he freed himself from what appears to have been a self-imposed obligation, than he took to an equally earnest deliberation of how to choose between the professions of salesman or farmer. Interestingly, in this instance the prevailing morality was no longer that of the Christian faith, but rather the unmistakable doctrine of national socialism in which service to the German people was the highest good. It was a doctrine that certainly overlapped with the communal and purposefully insular principles of Kroondal in which its youngest members were generally expected to remain in situ and thereby, contribute to the settlement’s wellbeing. For Hugo, this would mean the likelihood of assuming his father’s occupation in which he felt a limited interest at best.

While the choice of occupations proved to be a difficult decision for Hugo Behrens, the advice of friends and no-doubt, a sense of familial obligation, eventually persuaded him to follow his father’s vocation as the settlement’s shopkeeper. With this decision having been made, his father duly enrolled him in a two year course to study commerce at the University of Stellenbosch.³⁶ It was an unusual step for a Kroondal family to choose to undertake, given that Stellenbosch was situated a thousand miles to the south west in the then Cape Province, as opposed to the more proximally located University of Pretoria. Yet, mirroring something of his own father’s decision to send him and his brother to the Eendracht School in Pretoria thirty years

³⁶ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). p. 21.

before, Gussy Behrens was both determined to give his children the best education that he could afford while expressing a firm belief in the virtues of spending time away from home as a young adult.³⁷ It followed that in spite of Hugo's fervent pleas to his father not to send him away and to put him straight to work in the family shop instead, Gussy's insistence won and Hugo boarded the train in February of 1943 that would take him to the Cape.³⁸

When appraising the Behrens family's decision to provide their children with a university education in the distant and then premier Afrikaner institution of Stellenbosch,³⁹ the inherited value is demonstrated that the family had come to place upon providing its children with an above average education. While this attitude could certainly be said to hold true for many other of Kroondal's families, it should be noted that the Behrens family's position as the settlement's shop-keepers had been instrumental in giving it the means with which to do so. What was even more noteworthy, however, was the fact that Gussy and Ida Behrens held this to be true for all of their children, so that their daughters Alma, Irma, Gerda and Linda were each, in time, afforded the opportunity to benefit from an exposure to University life⁴⁰ - though not without some important distinctions in what was deemed appropriate for their gender. With that having been said, it is also quite evident that this seemingly forward thinking philosophy (on the part of Gussy Behrens) took some time to develop, with the result that a clear discrepancy exists between the opportunities that were eventually afforded to the youngest of the family, Linda, as opposed to those of the eldest daughter, Alma. For her part, Alma had only been allowed to complete her "Junior Certificate" (Grade 10) before her parents withdrew her from the Rustenburg High School and entered her in the Pretoria Technical College on a secretarial course for a year.⁴¹ Once the course had been completed, Alma had been enlisted by her father to work for him in the family's business until her younger sister, Irma, had managed to complete the same course of education and was thus able to replace her in the shop. It was at this point, at the end of 1941, that Gussy and Ida Behrens, therefore, decided to send Alma to Stellenbosch to compete a two-year course in home economics.⁴²

³⁷ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 50.

³⁸ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler" (unpublished). pp. 21-22.

³⁹ P. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*. 1991. p. 62.

⁴⁰ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 50.

⁴¹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 50.

⁴² J. Wenhold (ed.), *Unsere Frauen Erzählen* 1996. 1996. p. 55; H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 21.

It follows that when Hugo Behrens arrived in Stellenbosch in February 1943, he would have been able to rely on the assistance of at least one acquaintance from the extended Kroondal community, Hermann Müller, who had completed his first year of tertiary education there.⁴³ However, while his sister's brief account of her time in Stellenbosch recalled the experience with great fondness (having struggled with homesickness during her initial time away from home in Pretoria),⁴⁴ the same could not be said for Hugo whose transition from the relatively insular and communally dominated life in Kroondal proved to be something of a struggle. Plagued by homesickness or *Heimweh*, Hugo tended to eschew many of the opportunities that life at the university had to offer.⁴⁵ Instead, as his journal entry of 14 May, 1943 shows, his thoughts were bent upon the life of family and community in Kroondal that he had come to idealise:

Ich denke an meine Heimat. Für 21 Jahre hatte ich ein Heim; ein Heim das ich mit niemand tauschen möchte; ein Heim in einem kleinen Deutschen Dorf von wunderbarer Natur umgeben, in dem liebe deutsche Bauern leben...⁴⁶

I am thinking about my *Heimat* (home). For 21 years I have had a home; a home that I would not trade with anyone; a home in a small German town surrounded by nature, in which kind German farmers live... (Own translation)

And yet, as much as Hugo's idealisation of Kroondal as *Heimat* was sharpened by his extended experience away from its community, his love of the town, its German inhabitants and the surrounding landscape could not dampen his perception that in South Africa he remained as part of an ethnic and ideological minority. Therefore, it was already on the eve of his departure to Stellenbosch that Hugo had penned the following words that expressed his sense of conflicted association to the African environment, an association that had become hostage to the idealised perspective of himself as a German:

Meine Heimat und mein Volk! ... Ich liebe dich, du offenes, geräumiges Land, wohin meine Väter aus ihrem überfüllten, engen Vaterland auswanderten um in

⁴³ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 22.

⁴⁴ J. Wenhold (ed.), *Unsere Frauen Erzählen 1996*. 1996. p. 55.

⁴⁵ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 22.

⁴⁶ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 22.

*dir zu leben und zu arbeiten... Du bist das Land, dem meine Liebe gehört. - - -
Und doch, und doch - - - Wo sind die Menschen, wo ist das Volk, das diese
große Liebe mit mir teilt? Ich liebe dein Volk nicht, ich kann es nicht so lieben
wie ich dich liebe. Nur dem deutschen Volk gehört mein Herz und meine Liebe.
Ich bin ein Deutscher und will und kann mich nicht von dem deutschen Volk
loslösen. Ich bin im Blute und im Wesen auf immer mit ihm verbunden.⁴⁷*

My Home (*Heimat*) and my People (*Volk*)!... I love you, the open spacious land,
to which my fathers came from their overcrowded and densely populated
Fatherland to live and work here...you are the land to which my love belongs. -
- - And yet, and yet - - - Where are the people, where is the *Volk* that shares
this love with me? I don't love the people of this land, I cannot love them the
way I love you. My heart and love only belongs to the German people. I am a
German and will not and cannot undo this bond to the German *Volk*. I am
forever bound in blood and in my existence to them... (Own translation)

It was in accordance with these sentiments that Hugo joined a small group of Stellenbosch students who, as he, were members of the Greyshirt party and who together made occasional trips to Cape Town to attend Louis Weichardt's party gatherings there. Although the details of these gatherings are not mentioned in his autobiography, the collective yearning for a favourable outcome in the war (for the Axis powers), is reiterated along with the wish that a German victory would provide the platform for a fascist South Africa and the return of Germany's African colonies.⁴⁸ Other than this, and the occasional excursion into the Boland countryside and those of the Cape's coastal regions, Hugo's first year at Stellenbosch was thoroughly dominated by his desire to return home.⁴⁹

Richard Behrens - "Eine Brotlosse Kunst" / A bread-less art

Where Hugo Behrens's first year away from Kroondal had been held captive by his notions of belonging to a different people and place, that his return to Kroondal during the summer holidays of 1943 seemed to cement the sense of purpose the he felt by being back among its community.⁵⁰ Therefore, it was all too soon that the summer break drew to its close bringing with it the time when he would have to re-

⁴⁷ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 20-21.

⁴⁸ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 24.

⁴⁹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 23.

⁵⁰ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 23-24

board the train to Stellenbosch in order to complete the final year of his diploma. Joining him this time, however, would be his younger brother Richard who, having completed his matric exams at the end of 1943, wasted no time in enrolling at Stellenbosch University where he intended to pursue his passion for music.⁵¹ It was a decision that had caused some consternation within the Kroondal community in which music, although prized as an important part of congregational and communal life, was hardly considered the basis of a career. So strong were these concerns that Pastor von Zwietring took it upon himself to dissuade Richard's parents from supporting this decision, while also taking Richard aside in earnest consultation, as Richard later recalled:

*Er sagte: Daß du Musik als Beruf wählen willst, geht nicht, denn Musik ist brotlose Kunst. Du wirst dir nie einen Lebensunterhalt mit Musik verschaffen können. Dein Weg ist doch klar: Dein Großvater hat das Geschäft gegründet; dein Vater hat es ausgebaut und nun ist da Platz für deinen Bruder Hugo und für dich. Hugo kann den Farmern die Traktoren verkaufen und du kannst den Damen die seidenen Strümpfe anpreisen.*⁵²

He (von Zwietring) said: It is not possible for you to choose music as your career because music is an unprofitable art (*brodlose Kunst* - "breadless art"). You will never be able to earn a living to be able to support yourself with music. Your path is clear: Your grandfather founded the shop; your father has expanded it and now there is a place for both you and your brother Hugo. Hugo can sell tractors to the farmers and you can assist the ladies in their purchase of silk stockings. (Own translation)

It is when reading these words by the community patriarch, Pastor von Zwietring, that the expectations of familial and communal duty in Kroondal are reiterated once again. As it was, the Behrens family's own patriarch, August Behrens, had not long survived the outbreak of the Second World War and had passed away peacefully at his *Bergheim* home after a short illness in December 1940.⁵³ Laid to rest in the Kroondal graveyard and with the last direct link to Germany thereby being broken,

⁵¹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 27.

⁵² R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. pp. 148-150.

⁵³ A. Behrens, "Lebenserinnerungen von August Heinrich Dietrich Behrens". (unpublished manuscript). p. 62-63.

the Behrens family would certainly not have taken the advice of their pastor lightly, not least given the fact that both Gussy and Ida Behrens had themselves been raised under von Zwierring's strict and authoritative influence. Yet, in contrast to the weight of these expectations, Richard's parents decided to discount their pastor's insinuations in favour of supporting their son's interests;⁵⁴ even if Richard did accede to changing his preferred B.Mus. to a general B.A. with Music and German as his majors. It was with these deliberations still fresh in his mind that Richard Behrens boarded the train to the Cape, (almost three weeks ahead of Hugo due to the University's music college or Conservatoire beginning its classes early) where he too would begin his new life as a student.⁵⁵

Where the life experiences of Richard Behrens, that will be examined in concert with those of his brother, Hugo, are to play an increasingly central role for the remainder of this thesis, it is important to reiterate the differences that exist in the nature of the material references that will be examined for each individual. Specifically, where the information on Hugo Behrens's life draws almost exclusively upon the extensive autobiographical account that he compiled in the later years of his life, Richard Behrens's own autobiography boasts no more than a modest ten pages, written to be submitted as part of a compilation of other short biographies by Kroondal's men in the late 1990's.⁵⁶ However, while Richard Behrens's personal account of his life cannot compare to that of the voluminous effort of his brother, it is in the extensive collection of written correspondence, primarily spanning the period of his time in Stellenbosch as a student, that proves to be an invaluable resource for a number of reasons. Firstly, unlike the reminiscences of his brother, Hugo, Richard Behrens's correspondence provides a direct window into his experiences as a young man without any interpretations that may have coloured the memory of these experiences in later life. What is more is that the bulk of these letters were written by Richard to his mother, Ida in Kroondal, whose replies form a complete collection of correspondence between mother and son beginning in 1944 until a decline in their frequency in 1949. In effect, they are letters that represent a fantastic source of primary material with which to gain additional insight into the experiences of the German-South African community during this time.

⁵⁴ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 52.

⁵⁵ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. pp. 149-150.

⁵⁶ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. pp. 148-158.

It is with this in mind that it is appropriate to include a brief appraisal of Richard Behrens's life and character before returning to the narrative of those events following his departure for university in 1944. Born in July, 1925, three years after Hugo, Richard had been exposed to the same childhood circumstances as those of his brother, even if his nature had led him to develop a totally different set of personal characteristics. With scarcely an interest in hunting, smoking or other stereotypically boyhood pursuits, Richard had apparently been content to devote himself to his school work, music lessons or simply obeying the general bidding of his parents. They were characteristics that had raised the ire of his brother who, by his own admission, had scarcely a kind word to say towards him during the course of his childhood. It was a fraternal judgement that appears to have been accentuated with Hugo's enthusiastic participation in the DJSA in which he prided himself at having "hardened his body and his temperament" (*mein ganzes Jungenleben hat mich abgehärtet; meinen Körper und mein Gemüt*).⁵⁷ In comparison, Hugo noted that he found Richard's nature to be feminine at best and that his brother's personality (and healthy appetite) had led to his remaining "soft", "round" and generally "uninitiated into the life of a boy".⁵⁸ They are observations that were echoed (in part) by Pastor von Zwierring's own critique of Richard's chosen direction that certainly seemed to reiterate the lack of (supposedly) masculine application that his young congregant appeared to possess.

In spite of these judgements, Richard's character seems to have sustained a conviction towards his own intrinsic interests that by the beginning of 1944, were increasingly being acknowledged and even admired by Hugo.⁵⁹ In particular it was his position as a model student that had allowed him to matriculate from Rustenburg High School with distinction while his abilities as a musician had earned him top honours amongst those in the region.⁶⁰ Although these results were undoubtedly fired by his inherent love for matters academic and music, they were also, and in no small part, due to his aptitude for disciplined work as he had demonstrated in the workload that he had undertaken at school. Here, on the days of his music lessons, he had had to rise at five in the morning in order to cover the ten kilometres to Rustenburg by bicycle to be in time for an early morning violin lesson from 6:30 to

⁵⁷ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 28.

⁵⁸ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 28.

⁵⁹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 28-29.

⁶⁰ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 50, 52.

7:30. Then, after being at school between 8:00 and 13:30, (and after devouring of a peanut butter sandwich that he had made earlier that morning) he first had his piano lesson from 14:00 till 15:00, followed by a Harmonium lesson from 15:00 till 16:00 and ending with an organ lesson from 16:00 till 17:00. With these lessons completed, it remained for him to cycle back along the dusty corrugations to Kroondal, balancing his violin and books, where, after his arrival home, there was just enough time for him to complete his homework before it was time for bed.⁶¹

It was with this passion for music and the encouraging support of his teachers and parents that Richard Behrens had been determined to pursue his love of the arts in Stellenbosch - this in spite of the misgivings of those more conservatively minded individuals in Kroondal.⁶² In doing so, it seems quite likely that Richard's departure from Kroondal would have been filled with the desire to disprove his pastor's skepticism and explore the opportunities that life might hold outside of the narrow bounds of Kroondal's community. At the same time, Richard's sense of duty and obligation towards his family remain all too evident, although in a manner that as in other areas, would remain distinctly different to those of his brother Hugo. It is with this as a backdrop that Richard's first letter from Stellenbosch brings some of these notions of duty to the fore:

Liebe Eltern und Geschwister,

Hier sitze ich nun im Kamer 117, Seksie 8, Dagbreek, Stellenbosch. Ich kann es selber kaum glauben dass ich so weit von euch weg bin, und dass ich jetzt ein Student bin...Ich hatte eine schöne Reise. Meine Reisegefährten waren ganz angenehme Menschen und wir sind gut miteinander fertig geworden... (Ich) habe mein Zimmer eingeräumt. Beethoven steht hier vor mir auf den Tisch und an der Wand hängt das Familienbild. So fühle ich mich schon fast zu Hause...

Vati und Mutti, Euch danke ich ganz besonders, daß Ihr mir dieses Studium ermöglicht. Ich werde mich anstrengen meine Pflichten treu zu erfüllen, und hoffe dass diese großen Aufgaben nicht vergeblich sein werden.

Mit Herzlichen Dank und Gruß,

⁶¹ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 149.

⁶² R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 150.

*Euer Richi*⁶³

My dear Parents and Siblings,

Here I am, sitting in room 117, Section 8, Dagbreek, Stellenbosch. I can hardly believe that I am so far away from you and that I am a student now... I had a good trip. My travelling companions were pleasant and we got along fine... (I) have moved into my room. Beethoven is positioned on the table in front of me and the family picture is on the wall, so I am almost feeling at home already...

Vati (father) und *Mutti* (mother), I especially want to thank you for making this studying possible. I will make every effort to fulfil my duty and hope that the enormity of this task will not be in vain.

With sincere thanks and greetings,

Your Richi

(Own Translation)

With this excerpt from the first of what would become a weekly letter home to Kroondal, Richard seems to revel in the experience of his arrival in Stellenbosch. Indeed, for a young man who had never heard a symphony concert in person before, the opportunity to be able to attend such an event soon after his arrival, albeit in Cape Town after the long and lonely journey on a bicycle, reportedly left him with feelings of euphoria as he trundled back to Stellenbosch late into the night.⁶⁴ As for the days, the rigours of the Conservatoire's classes and practicing schedule soon held sway over most of his waking hours in which his teacher and head of department, Prof. Maria Fismer, insisted on a regimen of four hours of piano practice a day - this besides an additional hour of organ playing that had to be scheduled over lunch time that, together with his other classes, left him with a routine that ran between 8:00 in the morning and 18:00 in the evening.⁶⁵ Other than this, his fondness for browsing the University's extensive record collection and attending its *Musiekvereniging* (music society) evenings soon saw him elected onto its committee and placed in charge of its regular Sunday record playing programme.⁶⁶

⁶³ Richard Behrens, Letter to Ida Behrens 1944-02-02.

⁶⁴ Personal information: R. Behrens, 13 Kronendal Laan, Stellenbosch, Western Cape. 2006-08-16.

⁶⁵ Richard Behrens, Letter to Ida Behrens 1944-02-08.

⁶⁶ Richard Behrens, Letter to Ida Behrens 1944-03-12.

Not that these new-found pursuits did not come with their own fair measures of adjustment and at times annoyance given that life as a first-year student necessitated navigating the University “*doop*” or initiation rituals. More than this, and probably in no small part also because of it, Richard’s first impression of many of his fellow hostel mates proved to be less than complimentary, leading him to express his irritation at what he described as the “simple” behaviour of the Afrikaans students and noting to his parents that he is happy that he is not a “Boer” (*Bauer*).⁶⁷ In this respect at least, Richard’s arrival in Stellenbosch followed in a similar vein to that of his brother, Hugo, whose sense of self-awareness (as a German) had coloured much of his first year at the institution. However, where Hugo’s perception of his own cultural and ethnic differences compared to those around him were set according to the then predominantly militant pattern of German nationalism, Richard’s appropriation of these beliefs appears to have been on a far less rigid scale.

Nevertheless, it is plainly obvious from Richard’s letters that his sense of duty was informed by a belief in his custodianship of his Germanness, even if to him, its legacy was more evident in Bach or Beethoven than in the politics of Nazism and the Third Reich. Therefore, it is no surprise that when reading Richard’s letters to his parents in Kroondal, there is ample evidence of his many efforts to sustain his association to what he regarded as the most important elements of his German heritage. Amongst these were his ready observance of the Lutheran church calendar, that in the absence of a German congregation in Stellenbosch, saw him undertake several Sunday morning excursions to Cape Town to attend the German Lutheran church services there.⁶⁸ For the most part, however, his interaction with fellow German speakers in Stellenbosch was facilitated by the regular invitation to a meal by one of two German professors at the University, Prof. Friedländer and Prof. Heydorn.⁶⁹ It was a friendly association that undoubtedly benefitted from the generally pro-German (anti-British) sentiments that many Afrikaner students and lecturers in Stellenbosch maintained during the war.⁷⁰

Joining him in Stellenbosch at the end of February was Hugo, who brought with him the prized possession of a wireless radio for the room that he and his brother were to

⁶⁷ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida Behrens 1944-02-03; 1944-04-10.

⁶⁸ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida Behrens 1944-03-12; 1944-04-02; 1944-04-10.

⁶⁹ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida Behrens 1944-03-26; 1944-10-15; 1944-10-21.

⁷⁰ G. Heindrich, *Die Dinamika van Blank en Bruin Verhoudinge op Stellenbosch (1920-1945)*. (Masters Dissertation). Stellenbosch. 2006. pp. 106-107.

share in the Dagbreek hostel that year. It was a device that, as in Kroondal, proved to be something of a novelty and Richard wrote his parents that he hoped their room would not soon become a “general relaxation resort” (*ein allgemeines Erholungsheim*) for the other students in the building.⁷¹ They were fears that were, however, soon confirmed in a letter two weeks later when Richard bemoaned the fact that “these Afrikaners all too often felt obliged to visit them” and that all this socialising merely leads to “lost time” and “nothing productive”.⁷² These were remarks that seem to reiterate the sense of cultural distinctiveness that members of the Kroondal community maintained to those groups around them. Yet, while both Richard and Hugo Behrens seemed to hold a sense of cultural exclusivity and even superiority towards some of the Afrikaans students, this did not preclude them from forming friendships with some of those from the student community around them, even if on the whole, they sought the company of other German speakers as a rule. This was made further evident when the brothers decided to join one of the University’s *Berg en Tour Klub*’s expeditions during the April holidays, that despite his excitement, saw Richard expressing that in an ideal world he would “have wished to do so with different company”.⁷³ As it turned out, the brothers had acted upon their decision too late and the tour was already fully booked, leaving them to undertake their own cycle tour of the Boland region instead.⁷⁴

Ida Behrens - Black & White Relationships in Kroondal

If Richard Behrens’s first letters from Stellenbosch highlight the awareness that both he and his brother held of their German heritage, specifically when seen against the backdrop of Stellenbosch as a predominantly Afrikaans university town, then the record of his correspondence home also reveals further aspects of the Kroondal community’s relationship with those cultural groups around them. In particular, the letters that were written to Richard by his mother, Ida, provide a regular and often detailed description of life in the Kroondal settlement that included frequent references to the Black individuals that were in her and her husband’s employ. In fact, of the thirty-four letters that were sent by Ida to her sons during 1944, no fewer than sixteen detail some aspect of these experiences. They usually had some form of frustration that provides a sense of the underlying strain that was part of interracial

⁷¹ Richard Behrens, Letter to Ida Behrens 1944-02-20.

⁷² Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida Behrens 1944-03-19.

⁷³ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida Behrens 1944-03-19. (“*Ich freue mich schon um auf diese Art und Weise das Land ein bisschen kennen zu lernen, wenn man vielleicht auch wünschen könnte dass man es in anderer Gesellschaft tun dürfte.*”).

⁷⁴ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida Behrens 1944-04-16.

interactions in Kroondal during that time. Therefore, beginning with a letter to Hugo and Richard in Stellenbosch on 20 February 1944, Ida makes the first mention of what would eventually amount to a litany of complaints regarding what (to her eyes at least) seemed to be the untrustworthy and erratic behaviour of her Black workforce.

Was mir Gestern in der Arbeit masslos ärgerte, ist nähmlich (sic) das Mädchen, genannt Selina...Freitag Nachmittag kam ihre Mutter hier an und erklärte sie will Selina holen... Alle meine Vorstellungen, auch das ich ihr kein Geld gebe wenn sie nicht 1 Monat Kündigung arbeitet, half nichts, sie ist nun gestern mit ihrer Mutter abgezogen. Das es nun ein bunter Sonnabend war könnt ihr Euch denken...Hier sind verschiedene Mamas gewesen die ihrer Kinder geholt haben. Ja nun fängt diese Mädchen Not (sic) von vorne wieder an. Wo findet man so ein Subjekt.⁷⁵

What really annoyed me in my work yesterday is the girl called Selina...On Friday afternoon her mother arrived here and explained that she wanted to fetch Selina... All my suggestions, even that I would give her no money unless she gives one month's notice were in vain and she left yesterday with her mother. You can well imagine how this led to a difficult Saturday...There have been various *Mama's* fetching their children here. Now this problem with maids begins again. Where has one ever heard of such a thing. (Own translation)

While Selina's mother's motives for removing her daughter from Ida's household may well have had something to do with the tragic asphyxiation of two Black employees at *Rosenhof* in 1927,⁷⁶ (as mentioned in the previous chapter) there is sufficient evidence to suggest that, by 1944, this legacy only represented one of the factors that contributed to these frustrations. Indeed, if anything, the sporadic departure of Black men and women appears to have been quite a common occurrence among Kroondal's workforce and only a few months later Ida was once more bemoaning the sudden disappearance of employees, however, this time from her husband's labourers at the shop.⁷⁷ It is a theme that by this stage of her life, appears to have engendered no small degree of cynicism from Ida and her letters

⁷⁵ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard & Hugo Behrens 1944-02-20.

⁷⁶ According to the letter, the mother alleged that local Matabele had accosted her daughter - a charge that others amongst Ida's staff apparently dismissed as a fictitious reason.

⁷⁷ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard & Hugo Behrens 1944-09-10.

are notable for voicing the frequent anticipation that a new member of staff would probably disappear once he or she had received their wages at the end of the month.⁷⁸

If the level of frustration that Ida Behrens felt towards the Black men and women in and around her home is quite palpable, then we have few means with which to gauge the true sentiments of the Black individuals who were on the other end of this relationship. However, reading between the lines of Ida's letters it is evident enough that a clash of cultures and expectations together with a fair measure of paternalistic judgement (on the part of Ida), certainly played their part in fuelling the nature of this discord. Even so, for a woman who had been raised on an HMS mission station and who spoke fluent Setswana, it is interesting to note that her dealings with her Batswana employees (by 1944) could have been dominated by such a strong sentiment of impatience. As such, her expectations of the men and women who came to work for her, and particularly those who spent periods of time working in the family's house, were that they should quickly and obediently adopt the household practices that she considered the acceptable norm. For those who failed to do so, or alternatively, did so too slowly, Ida's annoyance was only too obvious in her letters, and one can therefore also assume that she would have conveyed these feelings to those individuals in person. It is along these lines that Ida's struggle to secure household help included complaints that applicants were either "poorly mannered", "dirty and unkempt" or "not shy about discussing their wages".⁷⁹ In the case of the latter, this amounted to the applicants request of £1.15 per month, to which Ida agreed to starting at £1.05 and increasing it according to the performance of the work that she believed was being delivered.⁸⁰

On another occasion that same year, Ida mentions receiving a letter from a previous employee from Rhodesia, referred to only as William, who asked her to send him the money that he would need to make the return journey to take up work for her again. It was a decision that Ida seems to have deliberated about for more than two weeks before writing to her boys that she had decided not to send him the money, stating that she did not feel convinced that he would in fact use it to return, and even if he

⁷⁸ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard & Hugo Behrens 1944-03-26; 1944-08-20; 1944-09-02; 1944-10-04.

⁷⁹ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard & Hugo Behrens 1944-03-19; 1944-07-30; 1944-09-10.

⁸⁰ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard & Hugo Behrens 1944-03-26.

did, she feared that he might only stay for a month before leaving again.⁸¹ Similarly, another employee, named Tomson, wrote to her asking her to send him a pass that would allow him to travel back to Kroondal, a request that appeared to leave Ida bemused, wondering why he would not be able to make the journey without a pass⁸² (and therefore raising the question to what degree passes were actually used and enforced in the western Transvaal during this time?). Ultimately, it is from comments like these that we get a sense of the mutual frustration that these employer - employee relationships seemed to hold for both parties.

For the Black individuals, hampered by poverty and the repressive and racist laws of a segregated country, their ability to earn a living was an enterprise in which they held barely any power to negotiate their terms of service, or at times even be able to undertake the journey back to their employers. It was a system that only served to ingrain the paternalism that had become a hallmark of employer-employee relationships in South Africa and which (one imagines) led to the frustrated sense of both dependence and coercion on both sides. Seen from this perspective, and in the absence of other forms of recourse, it is hardly surprising that many Black employees (probably) chose to reclaim a sense of personal autonomy by leaving their employers without notice, and in so doing, subvert the positions of (racial) authority that had been placed over them. However, in the end, the systems of political and economic power were inevitably skewed in favour of their White employers who could benefit from the general availability of cheap labour. Even so, the frustrations of dealing with a fluctuant workforce only seem to have hardened Ida's perspective of Blacks as inherently unreliable and moreover, prone to misdemeanours.⁸³

Where Ida Behrens felt compelled to share these frustrations with her sons in Stellenbosch, it should be noted that her letters were not merely confined to a barrage of negative emotions either. Written with an almost predictable frequency most Sundays, Ida took it upon herself to convey the family's news as well as that of the general settlement to her two boys. In return, her expectations were quite clear and both Hugo and Richard were required to send their own weekly letters home. It was a task that Hugo (at least on one occasion⁸⁴) bemoaned as being too stifling, but

⁸¹ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard & Hugo Behrens 1944-08-20; 1944-09-02.

⁸² Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard & Hugo Behrens 1944-08-20.

⁸³ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard & Hugo Behrens 1944-04-23; 1944-05-21; 1944-08-20.

⁸⁴ Richard Behrens, Letter to Ida Behrens 1944-05-28.

that his mother insisted could at most be relented during exam times when they would be allowed to resort to a weekly postcard instead.⁸⁵ As for Richard, being the younger and generally more compliant of the two brothers, he remained steadfast in this duty by sending home no less than forty three letters in 1944 - that in comparison to the thirty four letters that were sent to him that year by his mother. However, given that all this correspondence was subject to wartime censorship by the South African government (with a reasonable number of letters being opened and resealed by the censor),⁸⁶ it is to be expected that these would shy away from making any more explicit remarks regarding the politics of the war that was still raging in Europe.

Yet, in spite of these circumstances, there are a few instances when some more explicit references to political events do appear, including a mention from Ida on 11 November 1944, that the Greyshirt leader, Louis Weichardt had been arrested in Comondale, Natal, an event that apparently caused quite a stir in the German community there.⁸⁷ In turn, one of the only indications⁸⁷ regarding Richard's interests in such events can be found in a letter from 16 September where he mentions that both he and Hugo had been invited to join the Weichardts for a "party" in Cape Town.⁸⁸ Other than this, Richard's most explicit reference to politics comes from a letter on 26 November when, towards the end of his exams, he writes about picking up one of Hugo's books, a novel by Hans Grimm titled, *Volk ohne Raum* (People without space). As a work of historical fiction, the book, (that was written in 1926), was a direct response to the loss of the German colonial empire in the Treaty of Versailles and had become a popular seller in Germany in the years before the Nazi's rise to power. However, it was also no surprise that its title, that translates to "people without space" was quickly adopted as part of the Nazi justification for Germany's need for *Lebensraum* or "living space" in the east. Interestingly, in the narrative the book's German protagonist emigrates to South Africa, but after fighting in the South African War finds life under British rule "unbearable" and supposedly holds that local Germans were being "treated as second-class citizens".⁸⁹ In response, the book's character decides to move to German South West Africa where

⁸⁵ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard & Hugo Behrens 1944-10-26.

⁸⁶ The exact number is impossible to determine given that many of the envelopes appear to have been discarded.

⁸⁷ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard & Hugo Behrens 1944-11-11.

⁸⁸ Richard Behrens, Letter to Ida Behrens 1944-09-16.

⁸⁹ F. Carsten, *Journal of Contemporary History*. "'Volk ohne Raum'. A Note on Hans Grimm". Vol. 2, Issue 2. 1967. pp. 221-222.

he at last finds success, before this territory too is lost to the British Empire during the First World War. Thus, it appears that Richard was thoroughly captivated by the message in its pages, and he wrote home stating that while he was not sure who among the family had read it, he believed it important that “every German should read it at some point”.⁹⁰

Hugo Behrens - Relationships and SWA

It was with the end of 1944 in sight that both Richard and Hugo looked forward to returning home to Kroondal for the December holidays. For Richard, it was a break that heralded the end of his first year at the university and one that by all accounts, he had been quite successful in at managing to adapt to his new surroundings. In contrast, for Hugo, the culmination of his second year at Stellenbosch signalled the end to what he had considered a difficult absence from Kroondal and with it, the opportunity to return to living in a German community. In doing so, and one imagines similarly inspired by the narrative of *Volk ohne Raum*, he had managed to arrange to spend nine months of the following year (1945) in an apprenticeship to the company Woerman, Brock & Co. in Windhoek, South West Africa. It was a connection that had been made through one of the German lecturers at the University, Prof. Heydorn, and that his parents had agreed to on the understanding that Hugo would return to help his father in the shop in the year thereafter.⁹¹ Thus, it was an opportunity that would allow Hugo a chance to fulfil his dream of experiencing life in one of the former German colonies, even if the territory of South West Africa no longer provided any direct links to the German state.

Of course, among the motives that Hugo considered an important part of his impending year abroad, was the opportunity to be able to meet and become better acquainted to a wider circle of German girls. Indeed, for a young man who felt convinced that it was his duty to marry within the bounds of his German ethnicity, the limited number of eligible young women in Kroondal had led him to conclude that he should look outside of its community for a suitable wife.⁹² Yet, it was exactly at this point, at the end of 1944, that the unthinkable, and perhaps predictable occurred, when he met and promptly fell in love with one of his fellow Stellenbosch students, an Afrikaans girl named Anneke Russouw. It was a meeting that had taken place on one of the university’s *Berg en Tour Klub* expeditions over the October holidays that

⁹⁰ Richard Behrens, Letter to Ida Behrens 1944-11-26.

⁹¹ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). pp. 31, 43.

⁹² H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). pp. 29, 42, 48, 54.

he and Richard had signed up for that September (after having missed the first tour in April).⁹³ Here, the two brothers had been proud to regale their fellow hikers with German marching songs that on the second day saw Hugo strike up a conversation with the blonde Anneke when the group (of forty or so hikers) became divided whilst crossing the Breede River.⁹⁴ As the day wore on and the conversation deepened, the mutual attraction quickly came to the fore and by the following day, Hugo recounts that he was thoroughly in love.

...auch hatte ich mir bis dahin vorgenommen niemals ein Verhältnis mit einem "afrikaansen" Mädchen anzuknüpfen... Der Einklang machte mich fast rasend...Wie anders sah Stellenbosch aus und wie hatte sich mein Ausblick aufs Leben und die Zukunft geändert! ... Mit einem Mal schien die Zeit, die mir noch in Stellenbosch blieb, viel zu kurz. Ich überlegte ob ich nicht noch ein Studienjahr anhängen sollte...ob ich Anneke heiraten und Kroondal und meinen Bestrebungen deutsch zu bleiben adieu sagen sollte.⁹⁵

...even though I had always maintained that I would never enter into a relationship with an "Afrikaans" girl... The resonance between us left me virtually frenetic... How different did Stellenbosch seem and how my view of life and the future had changed!... Suddenly the time that I still had left in Stellenbosch seemed far too short. I considered whether I should stay on for another year of study... (and) whether I should marry Anneke and say goodbye to Kroondal and to my ideals of wanting to remain German.
(Own translation)

Plagued by the turmoil of these emotions, Hugo suffered sleepless nights and yet, in spite of his deliberations, soon made it clear to Anneke that all that he would be able to offer her was friendship. It was, by his own admission, a "gruesome" decision to which he believed himself bound as a "committed German National Socialist".⁹⁶ Nevertheless, in the weeks that followed, Hugo and Anneke endeavoured to spend every available minute together before Hugo's departure at the end of the year loomed as an inevitable separation. Sharing a love for astronomy, Anneke gave him the book, "New Handbook of the Heavens" by Bernhard Bennett and Rice in which

⁹³ Richard Behrens, Letter to Ida Behrens 1944-04-02.

⁹⁴ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 29-30.

⁹⁵ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 30-31.

⁹⁶ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 29-30.

she had paraphrased a quote from Adolph Hitler's "*Mein Kampf*" as a dedication in the cover,

I can fight only for what I love, love only, what I respect and respect only, what I, at any rate, know about.⁹⁷

It was with this book in hand and a kiss from Anneke that Hugo Behrens departed Stellenbosch on 27 November 1944, to head home to Kroondal for the holidays before his time in South West Africa would begin in March the following year. In a somewhat impulsive decision, he decided to forgo the train as his means of reaching home and instead undertook to cycle the approximately 1400km on his single speed Philips bicycle.⁹⁸ In turn, Richard (who was required not to tell the rest of the family about the endeavour) would follow in the train with the bulk of Hugo's possessions at the end of his exams, leaving Hugo to mount his expedition on his own. Thus, with a single sleeper tent strapped onto the back, a rucksack on his shoulders and a water sack slung under the cross bar, Hugo set off on his adventure that would take him through the semi-desert of the Karoo in the full heat of the South African summer. Therefore, arriving on the outskirts of Kroondal twelve days later, sunburnt, exhausted but happy and having accepted the assistance of a few passing motorists, Hugo strode into the household unannounced to be greeted by his astonished family.⁹⁹

With the Behrens family reunited in *Rosenhof* for the holidays the next few months seemed to pass in the predictability of Kroondal's community and Hugo recalls spending most of this time assisting his father in the shop. However, by the end of March 1945 and with his brother Richard having returned to Stellenbosch University, Hugo was himself soon boarding the train to South West Africa in order to start the nine months of internship there.¹⁰⁰ Leaving in the evening from Pretoria station and enduring a long wait in De Aar for the connecting train to South West Africa, Hugo recalls arriving in Windhoek where he was met by one of his new colleagues, Willy Steck, who took him and his luggage to his hotel before giving him a small tour of the town on his motorcycle. Riding past the colonial landmark of the German Lutheran *Christuskirche*, and in keeping with the pious Kroondal tradition of observing the

⁹⁷ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 31.

⁹⁸ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 31.

⁹⁹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 32-39.

¹⁰⁰ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 40.

Sunday sabbath, Hugo describes how he felt compelled to ask what time the services were held, to which he was somewhat astonished to receive the answer, “*Keine Ahnung!*” - “No idea!”.¹⁰¹ It was a moment that Hugo recalled left him struck by the awareness of how the Germanness that he had come to regard as normal in Kroondal, could not necessarily be equated with the Germanness of those living in South West Africa. And, as if this realisation was not enough, after barely one month of his time in SWA, the news arrived that the German armies in Europe had collapsed and that Hitler had committed suicide.¹⁰²

The news of Germany’s surrender and the defeat of the national socialist ideals that he so espoused came as a terrible blow to Hugo who wrote that its event left him feeling thoroughly broken and disheartened (*moralisch gebrochen*).¹⁰³ While no diary entry is available for the actual date of Hitler’s suicide (30 April) or Germany’s official surrender on 7 May, 1945, Hugo penned the following thoughts in the last week before the collapse as the Battle of Berlin raged thousands of kilometres away:

Windhoek - 22. April 1945.

Ich gehe oben auf dem Hügel mit der Leutweinstraße entlang. Da ist die Deutsche Kirche - erleuchtet heute Abend? Ich meinte schon die Kirche stände nur noch als Zierde da und werde wahrscheinlich nur noch zu Hochzeiten und Begräbnissen gebraucht. Zwei Wochen bin ich nun schon hier in Windhoek; wäre gern mal in die Kirche gegangen, aber niemand geht scheinbar zur Kirche...Langsam gehe ich die Wege entlang und...steige die Treppen hinauf die zu dem Tintenpalast führen.

Da sitze ich lange und schaue in die Stille...Hinter mir das große Regierungsgebäude, in deutsche Zeit aus Naturstein gebaut...Links von mir steht das Heldendenkmal, errichtet zum Gedächtnis an die Gefallenen der deutschen Schutztruppe...Deutsches Blut ist geflossen, deutsches Leben ist geopfert worden dieses Land dem deutschen Volk bewohnbar zu machen. Deutsche Arbeit...hat diese Wüste ein bewohnbares Land gemacht...überall findet man Spuren deutscher Arbeit. Dieses ist doch ein deutsches Land! Und doch steigt es langsam in mir hoch, ein banges Gefühl, daß alles umsonst gewesen ist... Wird doch alles was deutsch ist, systematisch von der fremden

¹⁰¹ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). p. 40.

¹⁰² H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). p. 40.

¹⁰³ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler” (unpublished). p. 40.

Regierung unterdrückt und verstoßen...gilt dieses Land, dieses deutsches Land, doch schon fast als fünfte Provinz der S.A. Union. Von dieser Regierung sind die deutschen Männer interniert worden und wird versucht alles was Deutsch ist zu vernichten...überall spürt man Tyrannei. Wenn es doch nur zeitweilig wäre, wenn ein deutscher Sieg dem allen ein Ende machte, dann wäre es erträglich, gerne würde man alles erdulden. Aber, ach, wie dunkel, wie troslos sieht es mit unserm Deutschland aus. Der Feind steht vor Berlin und überall scheint die Front zusammenzubrechen. Deutschland, die schönen deutschen Städte sind vernichtet der neue deutsche Lebensgang vernichtet. O Gott, was wird aus Deutschland, was wird aus diesem Land, unser deutsches Südwest-Afrika? Wo ist die Gerechtigkeit? Darf das alles sein? Gott höre das Flehen der Millionen, schau doch d'rein, rette mit einem Wunder!¹⁰⁴

I walk along *Leutweinstraße* up the hill. There is the German church - lit up tonight? I had been under the impression that the church only remained as an ornament that would only be used for weddings and funerals. I have been in Windhoek for two weeks; would have liked to have attended the church, but it appears that nobody goes to church here...slowly I walk along the path and...climb the steps that lead up to the *Tintenpalast*.

Here I sit for a long time and gaze out into the quiet...behind me the big government building, built out of natural rock during the German time...to my left is the monument erected to commemorate those who fell in service of the German *Schutztruppe*...German blood was shed, German lives were sacrificed to make this land livable for the German people...German work turned this desert into an inhabitable land...everywhere there are signs of German work. This is certainly a German land! And yet, it slowly rises in me, a fear, that it has all been in vain...Everything that is German is being repressed and degraded... this land, this German land, is already being counted as a fifth province in the S.A. Union. It is this government that has interned the German men and which tries to destroy everything that is German...everywhere one senses tyranny. If only it were temporary, if a German victory would bring this all to an end, then it would be bearable and one could happily stomach it all. But, oh, how dark, how hopeless it seems with our Germany. The enemy is standing at Berlin and everywhere the front seems to be collapsing. Germany, the beautiful German

¹⁰⁴ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 41.

cities are destroyed, the new German way of life is destroyed. O God, what will happen to Germany, what will happen to this land, our German South West Africa? Where is the justice? Can this all be happening? God, hear the cries of the millions, intervene with a miracle! (Own Translation)

If Hugo's anguished sentiments bemoaned the fateful conclusion of the war, then he was certainly among the minority as after five long years of death and suffering, most people around the world could at last breathe a sigh of relief knowing that the conflict in Europe had ended. In this sense, Hugo's outpouring of grief represents the loss of an ideal rather than a true appreciation of the horror that the war had held for people on both sides. It is from this perspective that the diary's references to "our" Germany and "the beautiful German cities", neither of which he had ever laid eyes upon, or ever experienced the true tyranny of Nazism that had befallen them, illustrates the idealisation that had become engrained in many of the descendants of German expatriates. Indeed, for a community that had been groomed to regard their German heritage as the highest good, the collapse of the Nazi state that many imagined had served as the embodiment of these ideals was a blow that was not fully seated in the reality of what that movement had come to represent. Instead, situated many thousand kilometres away and informed by the media from both sides, many German South African's seemingly chose to ignore the worst or simply imagine the best of a regime that they believed had restored the pride of a country they had been taught to love.

As for Kroondal, the news of Germany's collapse appeared to weigh heavily upon its community, even if many of its inhabitants were not quite as bound to the ideals of National Socialism as Hugo Behrens professed to be. They are sentiments that were already evident from one of Ida's letters to Richard Behrens on the eve of Hugo's departure to SWA, in which she lamented the "serious political times" and the fate of "poor Germany".¹⁰⁵ Then after a few more references on the terrible "suffering in Europe" and "how terribly sad the future seemed" (*wie entsetzlich traurig sieht die Zukunft aus*) for their *Volksgenossen*¹⁰⁶ (countrymen) in Germany, Ida abandoned all concern for the possibility of censorship when she wrote the following to Richard on Ascension Day on 13 May, 1945:

¹⁰⁵ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-04-01.

¹⁰⁶ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-05-06.

Wir hatten gestern Abend hier bei uns im Esszimmer eine kleine Gedenkfeier. Nämlich Wolfgang Bodenstern besuchte uns am Donnerstagabend...Unter anderem erzählte er uns wie sie in Pretoria eine Gedenkfeier gehalten hätten. Da baten wir ihn, doch auch hier bei uns es zu tun...Wir sagten dann allen von Backeberg's, Theo Wenhold's + Muhl's davon, und wer mochte konnte kommen. Wir haben Hugo's Hitlerbild auf'n Sideboard gestellt, und Isolde, die grade Wochenende hier bei uns war, hat einen Eichenkranz gewunden, den haben wir dann um's Bild gehängt, an beiden Seiten 2 brennende Kerzen, und dann haben Theo Wenhold, Wolfgang, Werner Backeberg + Irma abwechselnd was vorgelesen, und die Jugend hat einige passende Lieder gesungen. Und zum Schluss haben wir all zusammen "Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott!" gesungen. Das ist wohl der schönste + trostreichste Gesang in unserm Gesangbuch. Wir waren nicht so viele. Unsere Familie waren 8, Backeberg's 5, die beiden Studenten, Theo + Gusti + Ernst. Es war aber wirklich so schön + feierlich. Und ich hatte nur den einen Wunsch, wenn doch meine beiden Söhne auch dabei sein konnten. Oh wie sieht es traurig + dunkel aus, und wie tut das arme deutsche Volk mir leid...(wenn) man nur wüsste, auf welche Weise man da helfen kann, ohne dass der Feind den Deutschen alles abnimmt.¹⁰⁷

Yesterday evening we had a small memorial service here in our dining room. This followed after Wolfgang Bodenstern visited us on Thursday evening... Amongst other things he told us how they had held a memorial service in Pretoria. So we asked whether he would hold another one with us over here... We then informed all the Backeberts, Theo Wenhold's + Muhls about it, and whoever wanted to join in was welcome. We placed Hugo's Hitler portrait on a sideboard, and Isolde, who was visiting us for the weekend, weaved an oak wreath that we put around the picture. On both sides 2 burning candles, and then Theo Wenhold, Wolfgang, Werner Backeberg + Irma took turns with readings, and the youth sang some appropriate songs. Then to conclude we all sang "A Mighty Fortress is our God!". It is probably the most beautiful and comforting hymn in our hymnal. There were not too many of us. Our family were 8, Backeberg's 5, the two students, Theo + Gusti + Ernst. It was really so nice and festive. And my only wish was that my two sons could also have been here. Oh, how sad and dark things are looking, and how I pity the poor German

¹⁰⁷ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-05-13.

people...(if) only one knew, in which way one could help them without the enemy taking it all away. (Own translation)

Where the Behrens family's memorial to Hitler leaves a stark impression of the sentiments that the family had maintained for the duration of the war, it is equally notable for the fact that relatively few of Kroondal's families were represented at this gathering. It is a conspicuous absence that was further clarified a week later when in her next letter to Richard, Ida complained of the manner in which some of Kroondal's Germans were becoming vocal in their criticism of Hitler's regime, writing:

Es macht einen nur so weh, wenn man alle diese Schmähungen über den Führer still mitanhören soll. Besonders traurig macht es mich, zu hören wenn Tante Berta B. sagt "Das geschieht dem deutschen Volk ganz recht, das sie die Niederlage haben, warum sind sie Hitler so gefolgt!" u.s.w. Ich habe mich richtig über Tante Berta geärgert, sie denkt immer Wunderheid von sich und ihre Meinung.¹⁰⁸

It just really pains one, when one listens to all these insults that are being directed at the *Führer*. It makes me especially sad when I hear Aunt Berta B. say "the German people deserve this defeat, why were they so willing to follow Hitler!" so on and so forth. I was really annoyed about Tante Berta, she always thinks the world of herself and her opinions. (Own translation)

It is from these words that we are once again able to confirm that the population of Kroondal were by no means united in their support of Hitler and Nazi Germany, even if many had remained ardent supporters of national socialism for the duration of the war. Therefore, writing back to his mother on the same Ascension Day weekend, Richard's emotions were similarly telling as he conveyed his dismay at the events that had transpired:

Man kann sich noch gar nicht dran gewöhnen dass der Waffenstillstand wirklich eingetreten ist. Wie furchtbar sind die Ereignisse der letzten Wochen gewesen! Wer hätte je geglaubt dass es solch ein Ende nehmen würde? Und wer weiss was jetzt noch folgen wird? Ich glaube wir müssen uns auf das Schlimmste gefasst machen. Aber dennoch dürfen wir den Kopf nicht hängen lassen...Wir

¹⁰⁸ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-05-21.

*müssen Wache halten und sorgen dass wir von Allem unterrichtet sind. Wir müssen unsere Sprache und Kultur hochhalten, und wir müssen arbeiten, so schwer arbeiten, dass unsre Leistungen besser sind als die der Anderen.*¹⁰⁹

It is still impossible to become used to the fact that the ceasefire has really come into effect. How terrible has the news been these last few weeks! Who would have believed that it would come to such an end? And who knows what is still to follow? I believe that we need to prepare ourselves for the worst. Even so, we must not let our heads hang low... We must keep watch and ensure that we are informed of everything. We must hold our language and our culture high, and we must work, work so hard, that our achievements are better than those of others. (Own translation)

While Richard's words capture both the sense of dismay and uncertainty that was felt by many German South Africans in the wake of the war, it is notable that he was, nevertheless, quick to fall back upon a sense of duty in order to guide his response to these events. Indeed, with Germany in ruins, occupied and thoroughly disgraced, many German (South African) individuals, just as Richard, would feel a sense of purpose in taking on the custodianship of a Germanness that it seemed, was then under threat in Europe. It was a sense that would become a guiding force in the lives of this, the third generation of the Behrens family, as they strove to fulfil the ideal of their German identity within what would soon become the beginning of the Apartheid era. It is within this context that the next chapter explores the German South African reaction to the Second World War along with its growing, though no less varied, association to the racial policies of the incoming Afrikaner nationalist state.

¹⁰⁹ Richard Behrens, Letter to Ida Behrens 1944-05-13.

Chapter 7 *Die Pflicht ruft* - “Duty Calls” 1945-1952

The letters that were written between Ida Behrens and her son, Richard, over the course of 1944 and 1945, offer an important window into the family’s emotional and ideological attachment to Germany during this time. Even so, it was only in the aftermath of the conflict that the true extent of this association, and that of the German South African population as a whole, would begin to re-emerge as a more tangible entity: one that would quickly centre itself upon the desire to send aid to Germany. It followed that on 1 June, 1945, barely four weeks after the German surrender had been announced, a small group of German South Africans met in Pretoria to launch the *Deutsch-Afrikanischer Hilfsausschuß* (German-African Aid Committee) with the express desire to assist German internees in South Africa, as well as to find ways of providing material relief to Germany.¹ Not surprisingly, the group adopted the same name as that of the relief effort that had been begun in the wake of the First World War, with the result that the term DAHA (as the organisation was otherwise simply known) was quite familiar to most German South Africans who were, therefore, also quick to respond to its call.²

For the inhabitants of Kroondal, the first mention of their involvement in the DAHA initiative come from the minutes of a meeting held in the settlement on 9 July 1945 in which nine men and six women were elected as part of a regional DAHA committee. Among those attending were Ida and Gussy Behrens who, in the case of Ida in particular, would quickly become very involved in the fund raising efforts.³ These included the collection of donations that by the end of September already amounted to 1796 pounds of which it was noted that ninety eight pounds had been contributed by sympathetic Afrikaners from the region.⁴ By the end of the year, this collection had risen to over three thousand pounds of which two thousand were transferred to the central DAHA office in Pretoria. As for the remainder, these funds were used in the procurement of wool and cloth that could be made into items of clothing, along with the purchase of livestock whose meat was to be cured and sold in order to generate

¹ (Anonymous), *10 Jahre DAHA. Deutsch Südafrikanischer Hilfsausschuß Pretoria 1945-1955*. 1955. pp. 1-2.

² (Anonymous), *10 Jahre DAHA. Deutsch Südafrikanischer Hilfsausschuß Pretoria 1945-1955*. 1955. p. 2.

³ Kroondal Archive. *Deutsch-Afrikanischer Hilfsausschuß (D.A.H.A.) Bezirk Kroondal Rustenburg. Protokol*. 23 August, 1945.

⁴ Kroondal Archive. *Kassenbericht des D.A.H.A. Bezirk Kroondal-Rustenburg - Stand der Kasse am 31 Dezember 1945*.

further funds.⁵ By the beginning of 1946, the accumulation of these items, particularly second hand clothing and shoes, but including other non-perishables such as chocolate, raisins, milk powder and soap, were packed into wooden crates and sent to Germany.⁶

It is in tracing these developments, as they affected the lives of the Behrens family, that this chapter gains its insight into the German South African community during the post war period. In this respect, it is in continuing to draw upon the correspondence between Ida and Richard Behrens that the investigation, on which this thesis is based, is extended into the second half of the twentieth century that would soon also become notable as the beginning of the Apartheid era. In doing so the theme of identity serves as the underlying current in the lives of both the second and third generation of German South Africans as they came to terms with the changing circumstances of both regional and global politics - circumstances in which the community's idealistic notion of Germanness would eventually find itself struggling to remain as easy to equate to Germany as it had been in the past.

Ida Behrens - Duty & DAHA

Thus, it is in a letter written on 22 July, 1945, that Ida Behrens first mentions the DAHA initiative when she wrote to her son explaining that she and five other Kroondal women had scheduled a *Schneidertag* or "tailor day" the past Friday to sew clothes for the relief effort.⁷ While it seems likely that Ida Behrens had been responsible for this initiative, the letter also makes it clear that its scheduling probably could not have come at a worse time for Ida, who, only the week before, had presided over the wedding arrangements of her eldest daughter, Alma, to the Kroondal farmer Ernst Muhl. Nevertheless, her pressing desire to contribute aid to Germany seems to have been as irresistible as it was quite obviously inconvenient and it is notable that Ida's rationalisation to shoulder these responsibilities came from a strong sense of duty. It was a perception that, although having characterised much of her life thus far, is all the more noticeable from her letters that increasingly took to ending with the refrain, *Die Pflicht ruft* - "(the) duty calls".⁸

⁵ Kroondal Archive. *Kassenbericht des D.A.H.A. Bezirk Kroondal-Rustenburg - Stand der Kasse am 31 Dezember 1945.*

⁶ Kroondal Archive. *Deutsch-Afrikanischer Hilfsauschuß (D.A.H.A.) Bezirk Kroondal Rustenburg. Protokoll.* 14 March, 1946.

⁷ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-07-22.

⁸ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1945-04-26, 1945-12-02, 1946-05-27, 1946-08-11.

When examining the role of duty in Ida Behrens's life, it is apparent from her letters that the notion of communal responsibility contributed to her shouldering of what at times seemed to become burdensome obligations. To this end, where the letters written between May and August of 1945 testify to her extensive list of family chores, they also mention a formidable list of engagements that she undertook within the broader community. This was especially the case when in the colder winter months Kroondalers took to slaughtering their pigs that needed to be hung and smoked to produce a range of traditionally German charcuterie. As such, Ida's letters recount how she spent successive weeks assisting other Kroondal families in the processing of their pork before repeating the process with her own livestock at *Rosenhof*.⁹ It was in the midst of these familial and communal duties that her commitment to the DAHA effort becomes all the more noteworthy when by mid-August Kroondal's relief effort began to include the sale of produce at Rustenburg's early morning market.¹⁰ Here Ida Behrens detailed the extent of additional work that had to be undertaken to process the meat that on the second outing totalled two hundred and forty sausages, forty chickens and an unspecified number of packets of bacon and biltong. It was a venture that appears to have been a resounding success in which the demand for the Kroondal produce was such that on that occasion the entire stock sold out within the space of half an hour, and in such a frenzy that not all the produce was able to be accounted for.¹¹ Even so, there is evidence to suggest that not everyone was equally enthused at Kroondal's partisan initiative and on 16 September, Ida's correspondence mentions that the Rustenburg mayor had voiced his objection to their participation in the market. Undaunted, the Kroondaler's merely switched the venue of their next sale (and what would also be the last for the winter) to Kroondal.¹²

It was in the midst of this frenetic period of her involvement within the Kroondal community that Ida Behrens's letters continued to lament that she only wished that she could do more to help the German people (*Volkstum*).¹³ This, while observing the fact that the mounting items of clothing that were being sewn, knitted and otherwise assembled would soon begin to overflow from their premises.¹⁴ It is a

⁹ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-07-22.

¹⁰ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-08-19.

¹¹ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-09-09.

¹² Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-09-16.

¹³ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-08-19.

¹⁴ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-08-19.

compelling picture of a woman who had never seen Germany, but whose belief in the existence of a greater German *Volksgemeinschaft* (ethnic community), and of her place within it, seemed to provide a fundamental part of her identity. In doing so it can well be argued that the same conceptualisation of what she regarded to be her duty towards her immediate (Kroondal) community was conferred upon what she imagined to be the greater community of her *Volksgenossen*¹⁵ (fellow Germans). It was an idealisation that was by no means unique to Ida Behrens, but that both her words and actions seem to confirm were what she believed it meant to be a good German *Hausfrau* or housewife. It could, therefore, be argued that it was this desire to be included in the imagined ideal of a German nation that, perhaps more than anything else, had attracted many German South Africans to become ardent supporters of the Nazi state. And yet, at the same time, it (Nazism) was an ideology that for those who were willing to observe its true nature, also represented an uncomfortable antithesis to their Christian faith in which the principles of aggression, lordship and virulent anti-Semitism (that extended to questioning the basis of Christianity itself)¹⁶ were completely at odds with the identity of the original HMS. Here it would seem that the South African norms of racial distinctions, that had long since become part and parcel of the German community's colonial existence, played a part in rationalising the acceptance of such prejudices.¹⁷ Therefore, when placed together with the deference to authority and the glorification of all things German, the will to question the dangers of national socialism was often no match for that which many German South African's simply preferred to believe the Nazi state to represent. Namely, a benevolent authority that had campaigned for the restoration of Germany's pride amongst the nations and, just as importantly, for the recognition of their German expatriate communities (*Volksdeutsche*)¹⁸ as equal affiliates to the German nation, albeit living in isolation and abroad.

It was with the benefit of such seemingly wilful ignorance, fed by the propaganda of the Nazi state and undoubtedly, some significant suspicions regarding the veracity of anti-German and anti-Nazi reporting during the war, that communities such as Kroondal seem to have sustained their faith in the German cause.¹⁹ Yet, what is

¹⁵ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-05-06.

¹⁶ M. Perry, *Western Civilization - A Brief History*. 1997. p. 562.

¹⁷ C. Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag*. 1998. p. 250.

¹⁸ A. Hagemann, *Südafrika und das "Dritte Reich". Rassenpolitische Affinität und machtpolitische Rivalität*. 1989. p. 84.

¹⁹ Kroondal Archive. J. v. Zwietring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 52.

more striking still is that in the entire collection of personal and archival materials available for writing this thesis, there appears to be no single reference to the news of Nazi atrocities that by April 1945 were beginning to be reported around the world.²⁰ While it might be possible to suggest that Richard Behrens's words to his mother, written on 13 May, 1945 (and quoted at the end of the preceding chapter), regarding "shocking revelations" (*furchtbar(e) Ereignisse*)²¹ could be interpreted as representing some evidence of such an acknowledgement, it would still constitute a far cry from a frank recognition of what in the years thereafter would become known as the Holocaust. Naturally, while it is also impossible to gauge what may have been discussed by members of the Kroondal community in person, the lack of any written evidence leads one to assume that the topic was probably largely avoided. In comparison, when contrasted against the community's almost feverish involvement in the DAHA initiative, it is not infeasible to conclude that this glaring distinction may well have played a significant role in Kroondal's ability to come to terms with its post war German identity. Indeed, where the full revelation of Nazism's horrors might easily have threatened to discredit the identity of Germanness for an entire generation of German South Africans, then the avoidance of its inconvenient truth and that of its associated label of "perpetrator" seemed to shield a community such as Kroondal from the collapse of an ideal to which they had clung so dearly. It is here that the DAHA initiative can, at least in part, be regarded as an alternative preoccupation in which the emphasis on Germany's own suffering allowed German South Africans to associate themselves to the far more agreeable identity of Germans having become victims themselves.

As 1945 drew to a close the Kroondal DAHA committee arranged to contribute a batch of Christmas cake to the approximately one thousand six hundred German and SWA internees who were still being held in the detention camp of Baviaanspoort, east of Pretoria.²² Then, by the beginning of 1946 the central DAHA committee was informed that the majority of the German internees and particularly those from SWA, though initially not including German sailors and servicemen, would be eligible for parol, provided that they could be hosted within the Union until they were cleared to return home. Seizing the opportunity, the DAHA committee sent out a new call to its

²⁰ *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. "Eisenhower Asks Congress and Press to Witness Nazi Horrors". (Access: 14 May 2018)
<https://newspapers.ushmm.org/events/eisenhower-asks-congress-and-press-to-witness-nazi-horrors>

²¹ Richard Behrens, Letter to Ida Behrens 1944-05-13.

²² Kroondal Archive. *Deutsch-Afrikanischer Hilfsauschuß (D.A.H.A.) Bezirk Kroondal Rustenburg. Protokoll*. 22 December, 1945; H. von Delft, *Kirchbau am Kap*. 1993. p. 45.

affiliated communities asking families to volunteer board and lodging for these men. Not surprisingly, the Kroondal community were quick to respond and by May Ida makes the first mention of German internees arriving in Kroondal so that by July sixty three men were being hosted by families throughout the settlement.²³ As before, it is a testament to the nationalistic zeal of the German South African community in general, and one that facilitated this process in which families opened their doors to strange men simply because they were of German origin. However, the fact that this process did not always go smoothly is also evident as Hugo Behrens later noted when writing of his return to Kroondal at the beginning of 1946.

*Im Großen und Ganzen waren die Südwestler ein ganz anderer Schlag Menschen als die Kroondaler und es war gewiß nicht leicht für sie sich Kroondal anzupassen. Sie waren nicht so kirchlich erzogen und manche Sitten und Bräuche der Kroondaler schienen ihnen fremd, aber es entwickelten sich doch nette Verhältnisse.*²⁴

In general the South Westerners were a totally different type of person compared to the Kroondalers and it was certainly not easy for them to accustom themselves to life in Kroondal. They had not been raised with the same focus on church life and some of the Kroondaler's customs and practices seemed quite strange, even so, friendly relationships were able to be formed. (Own translation)

That these differences also made an impression on Ida is obvious enough, even if she limited herself to fairly muted commentary in her letters. In this regard, phrases such as "having her hands full" with the arrival of the SWA men or descriptions of some of the ex-internees as being "restless" or "disinterested" are certainly noticeable.²⁵ In other instances, such as the two men who had stayed with Ida's eldest and newly wedded daughter, Alma, Ida was unable to disguise her emotions when by the time of their departure in mid-September, she wrote that she was feeling relieved and that she "did not particularly like them" (*Ich mochte die beiden Herrn nicht besonders leiden*).²⁶ At the same time, it is also evident that these emotions

²³ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1946-05-12; Kroondal Archive. *Deutsch-Afrikanischer Hilfsauschuß (D.A.H.A.) Bezirk Kroondal Rustenburg. Protokoll.* 1 July, 1946.

²⁴ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 47.

²⁵ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1946-07-22.

²⁶ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1946-06-02; 1946-09-08; 1946-09-15.

were not always the case as when Ida mentions in her letter on 3 November that one of her relations, Olga Wehrmann, had become engaged to one of the ex-internees that had been boarded at their home.²⁷ At any rate, the arrival of 'other' Germans in Kroondal who, for their part, seemed to have had little interest in the settlement's decidedly pious Lutheran understanding of Germanness, appears to have been an interesting and at times challenging event for the community.²⁸

If Kroondal's exposure to a 'different' kind of Germanness than that to which they were accustomed was not without its difficulties, then the community's overall commitment to the relief effort never seemed to waver. Instead, by the beginning of 1948, a full two and a half years after its beginning, the DAHA initiative in Kroondal was only getting into its stride and by February that year, Ida Behrens could report that her sewing group had grown to number no fewer than twenty four women.²⁹ As in the years that had passed, all the items were sorted and packed, taking care to ensure that each had a greeting tag attached that would inform the recipients of its origins.³⁰ Then, it was with an obvious sense of pride that one by one, each of these crates were dispatched to Germany in what can only be regarded as the community's continuing desire to affirm their commitment to the German people.³¹ This was an emotion that was fittingly articulated in what would become one of the ageing Pastor von Zwierring's last yearly reports:

Das Jahr 1947 ist das Jahr, in dem uns die Not Deutschlands in fühlbarer und in fast greifbarer Gestalt vor die Augen geführt ist und Herz und Gemüt bewegt hat. Wie haben die Zeiten sich geändert! Es hat Zeiten gegeben, wo reiche Gaben aller Art von Deutschland nach Südafrika gekommen sind, und heute lebt die Heimat buchstäblich von den guten, nahrhaften Fett- u. Lebensmittelpaketen und den wertvollen Kleiderspenden, die von Ausland - auch von Südafrika - nach Deutschland gehen. Und - in aller Bescheidenheit

²⁷ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1946-11-03.

²⁸ By the end of 1946, and after the majority of SWA internees had been granted permission to return home, Kroondal repeated the process with German sailors who had been held as prisoners of war for the duration of the conflict.

²⁹ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1945-02-08.

³⁰ *Deutsch-Afrikanischer Hilfsauschuß (D.A.H.A.) Bezirk Kroondal Rustenburg. Protokoll.* (Kroondal Archive) 22 December, 1945.

³¹ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwierring, *Gemeindechronik 1895-1966*. 1966. p. 27.

*darf gesagt werde, daß Kroondal sich auch an diesem Werk der Barmherzigkeit für Deutschland beteiligt hat.*³²

The year 1947 is the year in which Germany's need was brought to us in an almost tangible sense and in a way that swayed our hearts and minds. How the times have changed! There were times when all manner of rich gifts were sent to South Africa from Germany, and today the *Heimat* literally depends upon the good, nourishing fat - such as, food packages and valuable donations of clothes, that are being sent to Germany from abroad. And, in this we may humbly acknowledge the fact that Kroondal has also been amongst those partaking in this work of charity for Germany. (Own translation)

It is from von Zwiétring's words that we are certainly able to obtain further insight into the sense of pride with which the Kroondal community undertook the relief effort, as well as that of the underlying sense of responsibility with which they seemed to approach this assignment. For a community devoted to the ideal of Germanness, the notion that they were not only needed by the "old *Heimat*", but to their minds, partly responsible for the very survival of its people, appears to have been uniquely gratifying to the identity that they had laboured to perpetuate for generations. That this responsibility was further extended to include a sense of custodianship of the cultural facets of Germanness (that were similarly imagined to be under threat in Europe) is noticeable when turning our attention to the experience of Richard Behrens in Stellenbosch. Here it is worth mentioning that our insight into Richard's recording of this period is undoubtedly influenced by the nature and emotions of his mother's letters to whom he was replying. And yet, at the same time, the sheer volume of Richard's correspondence home that between May 1945 and the end of 1948 numbered one hundred and fifty-three letters, does provide more than sufficient personal information with which to discern his overall impression of these events. Therefore, it is with a letter on 26 May, 1945 that Richard expressed his own particular sense of duty when he asked his parents for permission to attend a *Singewoche* or "singing week" in the German community of *Gerdau* during the upcoming holidays:

Ich möchte Euch doch bitten an der Singewoche teilzunehmen zu dürfen. Ich bin überzeugt dass ich sehr viel da werde lernen können, welches mir und

³² Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwiétring, *Jahresberichte Der Gemeinde Kroondal Von 1916 bis 1949*. p. 56.

*ändern von Nutzen sein wird. Gerade in dieser Zeit, wo der Russe dran ist die Deutsche Kultur mit Stumpf und Stiel auszurotten, ist es unsere Pflicht um das, was uns gegeben worden ist, nicht verloren gehen zu lassen, sondern es zu pflegen und auch ändern mitzuteilen.*³³

I would like to ask you for permission to take part in the singing week. I am convinced that I will be able to learn a great deal there which will be of use to me and others. This at a time when the Russians are busy eradicating the German culture root and branch, it is our duty to ensure that we do not lose that which we have been given, but instead strive to nurture and share it with others. (Own translation)

That these sentiments were not simply the product of fleeting emotions is evident when in the months that followed, Richard's letters went on to detail his growing involvement in various culturally German activities. Joining him in this endeavour were the small group of German speaking students whose monthly meetings at the home of Prof. Heydorn thus also began to involve a regular repertoire of German folk singing.³⁴ It was not long thereafter that these gatherings were expanded to include outings with the German Lutheran youth group in Cape Town,³⁵ while the introduction of a bi-monthly German church service in Stellenbosch similarly prompted Richard to form a small German church choir.³⁶ When placed alongside those of his other extramural activities that by July included leading the University's one hundred and forty strong junior choir, it is hardly surprising that he soon began to bemoan a lack of time.³⁷ Then, by the beginning of 1946, and with an increasing number of German speaking students being enrolled at the university, the German student body decided to extend its activity to include its own contribution to the DAHA initiative. Accordingly, time was set aside in which the students began to manufacture toys and garments that could either be sold to generate funds or be sent to Germany.³⁸ By September, many of these items formed part of a fair that

³³ Richard Behrens, Letter to Ida & August Behrens 1945-05-26.

³⁴ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida & August Behrens 1945-05-26.

³⁵ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida & August Behrens 1945-08-26; 1945-11-24; 1946-04-13; 1946-05-26; 1946-12-08.

³⁶ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida & August Behrens 1945-03-30; 1945-07-29; 1945-09-02.

³⁷ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida & August Behrens 1945-08-19; 1945-08-26; 1945-09-02; 1946-03-03.

³⁸ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida & August Behrens 1946-03-03; 1946-03-10.

included food, singing and folk dancing and that together with a number of musical concerts were arranged in aid of the DAHA charity.³⁹

It was in the midst of these developments that Richard completed his BA degree, graduating with distinction at the end of 1946 that thereby prompted his parents to take the then still unusual step of flying down to attend the event. Yet, with his propensity for music and academia confirmed, and with the encouragement of the University Conservatoires' head of department, Prof. Fismer, his parents agreed to sponsor a further two years of study that would allow him to fulfil his dream of a BMus degree.⁴⁰ Therefore, returning to the University in 1947, Richard not only seemed to revel in the renewed opportunity that lay before him, but similarly continued his commitment to the German relief effort that by the middle of that year included his participation in a German-South African pen pal programme.⁴¹ It was an extension of his activities that grew to encompass his regular correspondence with four different individuals that soon grew to include his sending parcels of food, clothing and even writing paper to his new acquaintances.⁴² Helping him fund these contributions was the small income that he had begun to earn from the University as an assistant harmony lecturer and piano teacher in the second semester of that year.⁴³ In doing so it is notable that Richard, much like his mother, continued to profess a deep and personal sense of empathy and, above all, responsibility in his commitment to this cause.⁴⁴

Youth Groups & Courtship

As the DAHA relief effort began to move towards its peak in 1947, its records show that by the middle of that year it was able to count no less than two hundred and forty seven separate branches and sub-committees across the South and South West African region.⁴⁵ In doing so, it was not only successful in orchestrating the collection of funds and materials that by the time of the initiative's dissolution in 1955

³⁹ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida & August Behrens 1946-09-01; 1946-10-20; 1946-11-24.

⁴⁰ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 150.

⁴¹ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida & August Behrens 1947-02-16; 1947-02-23; 1947-05-19; 1947-08-17.

⁴² Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida & August Behrens 1947-02-23; 1947-05-04; 1947-05-19; 1947-08-10.

⁴³ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida & August Behrens 1946-10-27.

⁴⁴ Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida & August Behrens 1947-09-14; 1946-03-10.

⁴⁵ (Anonymous), *10 Jahre DAHA. Deutsch Südafrikanischer Hilfsauschuß Pretoria 1945-1955*. 1955. p. 3.

would have generated over one million pounds, but also in its ability to facilitate a revival in the German South African community as a whole.⁴⁶ Indeed, for a community that had been intensely aware of the need for its propriety for the duration of the war, the opportunity to re-establish its sense of cultural pride was just as important a part of this period. This was especially true for the younger generation of German South Africans who, having been raised amidst the enthusiasm of German National Socialism during the 1930s, had chafed under the perception of their cultural ignominy during the war. It followed that as in the case of Richard Behrens in Stellenbosch, other similar efforts were soon being made to ensure that the cultural identity of Germanness along with the interconnectivity of its communities would be maintained into the future. Among those devoting themselves to this task was Richard's brother, Hugo, whose return to Kroondal in 1946 saw his renewed participation in the Kroondal youth group that had been re-started soon after the war. Here, Hugo's enthusiasm for the ideals of *Deutschtum* or Germanness, quickly saw him assume the group's leadership whereupon he busied himself reviving many of the structures that had made an impression on him during his own adolescence.⁴⁷ It was, therefore, hardly surprising that the Kroondal youth group took on much of the same pattern that had been the norm under the old DJSA and began involving itself in gatherings with other German youth groups from Johannesburg, Pretoria and the neighbouring HMS communities of *Gerdau* and *Hebron*.⁴⁸

It was in the spirit of such communal and inter-regional youth development that the Kroondal youth group accepted an invitation to a gathering that was to be held in the south eastern corner of the Transvaal (now Mpumalanga) at the beginning of 1949.⁴⁹ It was an event that had been initiated by a local farmer by the name of Gustav Schütte whose family was part of the German farming community of Braunschweig, situated just across the border in northern Natal. As with other German communities in the region, Braunschweig had been established by the descendants of the first HMS missionaries and colonists and, as such, shared the same heritage as the settlement of Kroondal.⁵⁰ However, where Kroondal's community had been established on the basis of a communal village through the division of a single farm,

⁴⁶ (unknown author), *10 Jahre DAHA. Deutsch Südafrikanischer Hilfsauschuß Pretoria 1945-1955*. 1955. p. 3.

⁴⁷ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 44.

⁴⁸ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 48.

⁴⁹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 55.

⁵⁰ *Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinde Braunschweig (1869-1978). Kirchweihjubiläum der Christus-Kirche*. 1978. pp. 2, 4.

Braunschweig featured a widespread collection of individual farms that in many instances lay considerable distances away from the little complex of the community's church and school. This was certainly true for the Schütte's farm, *Talagu*, that at twelve miles distance from Braunschweig in one direction, and another twelve from the little trading post of Comondale in the other, was quite secluded. Furthermore, given that the farm was placed on top of a mountain plateau and only accessible by way of a steep and narrow track, meant that its location was even more isolated. Yet, what the farm may have lacked in terms of its accessibility, it more than made up for in beauty and the family's homestead enjoyed a commanding view of the surrounding terrain.⁵¹

Therefore, arriving on the back of the Behrens's shop truck in January 1949, the Kroondalers were shown to their accommodation that was comprised of a collection of tents and outhouses along with the farm's wagon house that had been cleared for the occasion.⁵² Among them was Richard Behrens who, having been home for the holidays, had joined the excursion before his return to Stellenbosch where he was due to take up his new position as a full time lecturer at the University.⁵³ It was a significant achievement for a young man who once had been dissuaded from pursuing these dreams and it is not hard to imagine that Richard would have been in full spirits on arriving on the farm. As for the other Kroondalers, the excursion gave them the chance to visit a different part of the country and, just as importantly, an opportunity to get to know other likeminded Germans of their age. It was an aspect that was of particular interest to Hugo Behrens who, in spite of a growing list of friendships with various German girls, remained determined to broaden his search for a suitable marriage candidate.⁵⁴ While it is not difficult to imagine that such a motivation was also on the minds of many other individuals attending the gathering, few were (or have since been) as forthright in declaring their interests in this regard. What is obvious, however, is that for most of these individuals, the desire to remain, and therefore also to marry German, meant that they were increasingly required to search for suitable partners outside of their home communities. This was just as relevant for members of Braunschweig and it was said to be a standing joke within

⁵¹ Personal information: K. Hitchcock (née. Schütte), Durbanville, Western Cape. 5 February, 2016.

⁵² H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 55; "Einiges aus meinem Leben" (Personal information): I. Behrens (née. Schütte), 13 Kroonendal Laan, Stellenbosch, Western Cape. August 2001.

⁵³ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 155.; "Einiges aus meinem Leben" (Personal information): I. Behrens (née. Schütte)

⁵⁴ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 48.

its community that Gustav Schütte's true motives for hosting such events was to enable him to marry off his daughters.⁵⁵

True to these expectations, it did not take long before both Richard and Hugo Behrens took an interest in Gustav Schütte's second daughter, Irma, whose "fresh and cheerful nature" (*frische vergnügte Art*)⁵⁶ made a firm impression on each in turn.⁵⁷ For her part, the twenty one year old Irma similarly took note of the brothers, but recalled being particularly impressed by the fact that Richard was a university lecturer in Stellenbosch, an accomplishment that was still a rarity for persons from rural communities such as Braunschweig and Kroondal.⁵⁸ As the gathering progressed with its programme of folk singing, dancing, sport and bible studying, the brothers' interest in Irma continued to grow so that by the time of their departure, they had each resolved to begin writing to her in the near future. That this correspondence was soon established is clear and by March 1949, Richard's letters show that he was penning between two to three letters to *Talagu* per month.⁵⁹ As for Hugo, his own correspondence followed suit and soon also included an invitation for Irma and the other Braunschweig youth to join the Kroondal group on a two week excursion to Lourenco Marques that July.⁶⁰ It was an invitation that was duly accepted and thus it was arranged that the two groups would be reunited for the winter holidays to camp on the beach in the vicinity of Catembe, close to where the DJSA had likewise held its camp before the war.⁶¹ Not wishing to miss out, Richard Behrens made his own arrangements to travel to the gathering, a decision that had required him to forgo an important organ exam, but which, given the opportunity to see Irma Schütte again, he had been quick to dismiss.⁶²

For the German youth who camped at Lorencó Marques in the winter of 1949, it seems clear that other than the opportunity to continue to get to know one another,

⁵⁵ "Einiges aus meinem Leben" (Personal information): I. Behrens (née. Schütte), 13 Kronendal Laan, Stellenbosch, Western Cape. August 2001.

⁵⁶ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 55.

⁵⁷ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 155.

⁵⁸ "Einiges aus meinem Leben" (Personal information): I. Behrens (née. Schütte), 13 Kronendal Laan, Stellenbosch, Western Cape. August 2001.

⁵⁹ Richard Behrens, Letters to Irma Schütte 1949-03-07; 1949-03-31; 1949-04-08; 1949-04-24; 1949-04-29.

⁶⁰ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 55, 56.

⁶¹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 56.

⁶² Richard Behrens, Letters to Irma Schütte 1949-05-31; 1949-06-19.

the camp was also an attempt to relive something of an era that by then had already passed. Above all it was Hugo, as the camp's leader, who seemed most determined to revive the sense of Germanness that he believed had been lost over the course of the war.⁶³ Accordingly, participants were marshalled into a daily regimen that began at six with a bugle call, muster and physical training or *Frühspport*. Similarly, the rest of the day was tailored to conform to a strong sense of militarism in which orders and duties, that had once been the hallmark of the DJSA, were likewise expected to be adhered to.⁶⁴ Confirming these descriptions are some camp photographs that reveal neat and parallel lines of bathers standing to attention before their morning swim. Others still, show *Dirndl* clad girls strolling the beach or that of the camp's banner with the refrain "Heia Safari", (taken from the well-known song of the Imperial German *Schutztruppe* during the First World War)⁶⁵ strung over the camp's entrance.⁶⁶ Not that this seems to have precluded a significant amount of fun and joviality either, but it seems evident that a great deal of earnestness or at least, sense of cultural purpose, continued to hold sway over the gathering. In this respect it was Richard who took the lead in coaching the group through a repertoire of German folk and marching songs that had become the norm for such excursions.⁶⁷

By the time of the camp's conclusion and their return home, both Richard and Hugo Behrens continued their correspondence with Irma Schütte, even if Hugo had also begun to take an interest in one of his fellow Kroondalers, Irene Muhl.⁶⁸ They were deliberations that were, however, not shared by Richard who, after procuring his first car, a red, second hand Citroen, decided to join a hike that had been arranged in the Drakensberg mountains that December. It was a meeting that would have fortuitous consequences when Irma, somewhat unexpectedly, decided to join the tour, leading Richard to seize the opportunity and duly propose to her on the top of the Mont-aux-Sources peak.⁶⁹ With the proposal quickly accepted, so quickly in fact that Richard felt compelled to ask whether she would not also agree to bake bread for their home (as had been the norm for his mother, Ida), the couple drove back to *Talagu* to

⁶³ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 47.

⁶⁴ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 56.

⁶⁵ S. Bourquin, "Heia Safari!", *South African Military History Journal*. Vol. 7. No. 1. 1986. p. 1.

⁶⁶ Photographs - Irma Schütte collection. Kenilworth, Cape Town.

⁶⁷ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 56.; Photographs - Irma Schütte collection. Kenilworth, Cape Town.

⁶⁸ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 55, 57.

⁶⁹ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 155.

enable Richard to ask Irma's father for her hand.⁷⁰ From there the couple continued on to Kroondal where to everyone's surprise, they announced their engagement to the family. Not wishing to be outdone Hugo immediately set about sealing his own engagement to Irene with the result that the brothers' engagement could be announced together the very next day.⁷¹

Apartheid and Racial Relations

While Hugo and Richard Behrens spent the better part of 1948 and 1949 devoted to the ideals of their German heritage, that included their conviction to court and marry German girls, the political landscape of South Africa had undergone an important change. Beginning in the aftermath of the Second World War, the substantial attention given to foreign affairs by the then relatively liberal leaning Prime Minister Jan Smuts, had opened the door to a resurgent and conservatively orientated Afrikaner National Party.⁷² Campaigning for increased racial segregation under the slogan of *Apartheid*, they had gained sufficient ground among South Africa's rural White constituents to swing the 1948 election in their favour. Among those who appear to have supported this change were the German South African communities for whom Smuts's United Party represented the principal anti-German element in South African politics.⁷³ Interestingly, the Behrens family's correspondence makes no mention of the idea of Apartheid but rather, remains focused upon the potential benefits that the new dispensation would have for German internees still in South Africa, as seen in one of Ida's letters below:

*Ja was jetzt wohl alles passieren wird, unter der neuen Regierung. Über eines freue ich mich das doch nun keine Deutschen mehr deportiert werden, und hoffe dass man die armen Ost Afrikaner doch wieder zu ihren Eigentum verhilft.*⁷⁴

Yes, what all might happen now under the new government. I am happy about one thing, that surely now no more Germans will be deported, and hope that

⁷⁰ "Einiges aus meinem Leben" (Personal information): I. Behrens (née. Schütte), 13 Kronendal Laan, Stellenbosch, Western Cape. August 2001.

⁷¹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 55, 57.

⁷² P. Ludi, *Smuts: Lost in Translation?*. (Masters Dissertation). University of Pretoria. 2016. pp. 13, 94, 106, 109-110.

⁷³ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 114-115.; Richard Behrens, Letters to Ida & August Behrens 1947-10-12; H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 41.

⁷⁴ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1948-05-30.

the poor (German) east Africans will be given some assistance to reclaim their properties. (Own translation)

If Ida's letter makes little actual mention of the new Apartheid policy and even sounds somewhat dubious as to the changes that it might result in, it does not mean that she was in any way opposed to the policy of racial segregation. Rather, as this and other letters go on to confirm, her strong sense of paternalism towards her Black workforce, together with her generally low opinion of the local Black population as a whole, reiterate what can only be interpreted as a sense of both racial and cultural superiority that was undoubtedly also prevalent among most Kroondalers.⁷⁵ That this stance included some dubious labour practices as employed by many other White farmers in the region is similarly evident when on 14 March, Ida mentioned that her husband had meted out corporal punishment to one of their workers for theft, a sentence that she describes had been offered to the man, known only as Solomon, as an alternative to his immediate dismissal.⁷⁶ It is from references such as these along with Ida's persistent mention of the settlement's general inability to secure a reliable source of Black labour, that one may deduce that the Apartheid nationalist policies would certainly have been appealing to a community such as Kroondal.

And yet, while the premise of racial distinctions appear to have been virtually ubiquitous within the German South African community as a whole, it would, nevertheless, be inaccurate to suggest that these attitudes could thereby also be uniformly defined.⁷⁷ It is an aspect that is suitably illustrated by the Schütte family of *Talagu* where the personality of Gustav Schütte offers a very different picture of inter-racial relationships than would otherwise have been considered the norm. As a descendant of the first HMS colonists and artisans, Gustav Schütte had been born in a British concentration camp towards the end of the South African War and, orphaned soon afterwards, been sent to live with childless relations on the *Talagu* farm. Here, an isolated upbringing meant that his closest companions were the Zulu children in the area and it followed that Gustav had grown up with isiZulu as his first language, followed by German and only then Afrikaans and English.⁷⁸ Not that it was in anyway unusual for a descendent of the HMS to be fluent in the local Black

⁷⁵ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1945-02-08.

⁷⁶ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1948-03-14.

⁷⁷ Personal information: L. Ottermann, Altkroondal, Kroondal. 29 August, 2014.

⁷⁸ H. Bodenstern (née. Schütte), "Kind - Catherina Schütte". *Der Hermannsbürger Missionskolonist Hans Heinrich Röhrs und seine Nachkommen in Südafrika 1862-2002*. pp. 45-46.

language, but it seems that Gustav's association to isiZulu and its culture had been more influential than for most of his peers. It followed that Gustav was said to have enjoyed a particularly good relationship with the Zulu community of *Talagu* whose customs and traditions he readily endorsed. This to the extent that where many other White farmers in the region (including those in Kroondal)⁷⁹ discouraged the practices of traditional hut building, Zulu clothing and beer brewing, Gustav was disinclined to follow suit. In fact, himself a habitual user of Zulu snuff, Gustav's regard for Zulu customs extended to his permitting the cultivation and smoking of cannabis by the Zulu families on the farm.⁸⁰ It was a regard that was likewise extended to include matters of worker indiscretions that Gustav typically took to consulting with the local elders to ensure that any sanctions were well advised before being enacted. It follows that this relationship seems to have established a strong sense of mutual confidence, in which both parties were able to address matters of concern with the expectation that these would be both respected and addressed.⁸¹

It was in keeping with the nature of these relations that Richard Behrens's return to *Talagu* in January 1950, was quickly accompanied by the news that the local Zulu elder had asked to see him. With Gustav Schütte acting as translator, Richard recalled how he was informed in all earnestness that the daughters of the Schütte household were something quite special and that he would have to pay an appropriate *lobola* or bride price amounting to fifty head of cattle, as well as a sum of one hundred pounds to his future father-in-law. While Richard goes on to admit that the *lobola* was never actually paid, the elders' actions do offer an indication that the Schütte family were seemingly held in high regard by the surrounding Zulu community.⁸² It followed that after a full year's engagement, that Irma spent working to prepare her traditional German dowry, the wedding was held on 13 January in Braunschweig followed by a large reception on *Talagu*; an arrangement that was complicated when a cloudburst turned the mountain road into a muddy track. Thus, with guests having to be towed up the slopes by tractor and spans of oxen, the reception turned out to be especially lively and all the more so given that the farm's Zulu families had also been invited to attend. They performed a series of customary dances (*gida*) in honour of the bridal couple and were provided with an ox along with

⁷⁹ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1950-11-05.

⁸⁰ Personal information: R. Behrens, Hartebeeskraal, Paarl. 29 October, 2017; Personal information: K. Hitchcock (née. Schütte), Durbanville, Western Cape. 5 February, 2016.

⁸¹ Personal information: K. Hitchcock (née. Schütte), Durbanville, Western Cape. 5 February, 2016.

⁸² "Zusatz zu meinen Lebenserinnerungen" (Personal information): R. Behrens, 13 Kronendal Laan, Stellenbosch, Western Cape. August 2001.

uphuthu (maize meal porridge) and *utshwala* (traditional beer) with which to enjoy the celebration.⁸³ It is with such glimpses into the relationship between Gustav Schütte and the local Zulu community that the varied nature of the German South African community's interaction with Black South Africans is suitably emphasised. Even so, it should nevertheless be noted that such affinity cannot not be equated to equality and, given the fundamental disempowerment of Black South Africans at the time, it should be stressed that even the most benevolent of such inter-racial relationships would have been subject to an almost unavoidable degree of paternalism.⁸⁴

Barely three weeks after Richard and Irma's wedding in Braunschweig, it was Hugo Behrens and Irene Muhl's turn to be married in Kroondal in a celebration that counted over four hundred family and friends as guests.⁸⁵ Seen on the marriage register, the bride and groom were listed as the one hundred and twentieth couple to be married in the Kroondal church but also among the first few who, after the last thirty four years, would not be married by Pastor von Zwierring. As it happened, the then seventy-five-year-old von Zwierring had retired somewhat abruptly in mid-1950 following the Synod's decision at the end of 1949 to appoint an assistant pastor to succeed him in the near future. It was an act that brought an end to a remarkable era in Kroondal's history, spanning forty-five years with him as the settlement's hostel master along with thirty-four uninterrupted years as its pastor. In his stead, it was the newly arrived Pastor Paul Hagedorn of the German community of Lüneburg in Natal who presided over the wedding and who now stood at the helm of arguably the most prominent German community in the country.⁸⁶ This community, numbering three hundred and sixty five adults and one hundred and thirty five children at the end of 1951, had more than doubled in size from the two hundred and six men, woman and children that had been counted at the beginning of von Zwierring's tenure in 1916.⁸⁷ It was into this growing but otherwise familiar community that Hugo and Irene took ownership of their parent's house of *Rosenhof*, while these moved into their newly completed retirement home of *Steineck*, a few hundred metres distance from the settlement.⁸⁸

⁸³ "Einiges aus meinem Leben" (Personal information): I. Behrens (née. Schütte), 13 Kronendal Laan, Stellenbosch, Western Cape. August 2001.

⁸⁴ Personal information: K. Hitchcock (née. Schütte), Durbanville, Western Cape. 5 February, 2016.

⁸⁵ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 62.

⁸⁶ Kroondal Church Archive. J. v. Zwierring, *Gemeindechronik 1895-1966*. 1966. pp. 40-41.

⁸⁷ Kroondal Church Archive. Kroondal Statistischer Berichte 1916-2005. pp. 1, 71.

⁸⁸ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 64.

Deutsch-Afrikaner / German-Africans

The start of the 1950s that brought about the onset of the social and political changes that would become associated with the Apartheid era, appears to have had little immediate impact upon the White community of Kroondal. This seems evident from Ida Behrens's letters that make no more than a single reference to the new laws when, in mid-1950, she mentioned that Hugo had been fined five pounds for employing a number of Black Rhodesian men without a permit.⁸⁹ As for Hugo, his autobiography only mentions that he regarded the newly enforced separation of Black and White customers in their shop as a positive development and that the establishment was, therefore, better able to cater to what he regarded as the distinct needs of each group. That these changes had, nevertheless, also necessitated some alterations to the Behrens's premises meant that a planned extension to the shop had needed to incorporate a few changes to make it compliant with the incoming legislation.⁹⁰ As such, while it is possible to surmise that the onset of Apartheid created little actual inconvenience to White South Africans in general, it must also be noted that the scant attention that the Behrens family appeared to give to the new dispensation was influenced by the fact that by the middle of 1949, Gussy Behrens had received the alarming news that he was seriously ill. It was a development that had come to light when an initial diagnosis of diabetes had led to the discovery of tuberculosis in his right lung. It followed that for much of 1950, Gussy Behrens had sought treatment at the Kensington Sanatorium in Johannesburg.⁹¹ Yet, when by the beginning of 1951 the TB had spread to the other lung, his doctors had offered him little hope of being able to make a recovery. Therefore, it was at this significant juncture in both Kroondal's and the Behrens family's history that Gussy made the decision to seek out what he believed would be the best medical advice on offer. As this was widely considered to be at the TB medical facilities in the Swiss town of Davos (renowned for its relative success in treating an otherwise then still incurable disease), the decision was made that Gussy and Ida would leave Kroondal to seek what they hoped would be their best chance of an effective treatment.⁹²

⁸⁹ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1950-05-11.

⁹⁰ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 57, 59.

⁹¹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 64.

⁹² A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 53-54.

It was during this same period, as Gussy and Ida Behrens were embarking upon what would be their maiden voyage to Europe, that they left behind a community that was beginning to take stock of what had amounted to a decade of significant change. Not only had their stalwart Pastor, Johannes von Zwiétring retired, but by the early 1950s the tremendous energy that had been channelled towards the DAHA initiative was also beginning to come to an end. In response, and no doubt wishing to maintain the sense of purpose that the relief effort had instilled in the German South African population, the regional DAHA committee suggested that an attempt be made to revive the Kroondal German Day.⁹³ Thus, with the help of a new German periodical, *Die Afrika Woche* (The African Weekly), that was likewise instituted by the DAHA group, the first post-war Kroondal *Deutscher Tag* was advertised to take place in May 1951.⁹⁴ It was the beginning of what would thereupon become a renewed series of annual gatherings on the Behrens family's *Bergheim* property and that, as before, would serve as an important window into the collective psyche of the greater German population in the area. This was soon evident when the following year, the gathering's main address was delivered by the Kroondaler Conrad Backeberg, with the theme, *Die Aufgabe der Deutschen in Südafrika* (The Task of the Germans in South Africa). Not surprisingly, and as had typically been the case in the German Days of the 1920s and 1930s, Backeberg's message seemed to offer a response to the main political themes of the day. Here, it was the attention that Backeberg gave to the question of race or *Rassenfrage* that marks an important differentiation between the 1952 *Deutscher Tag* and those that had been held in the decades before. In particular, it was the reiteration of the dominant nationalist message of the day, that South Africa's White community could only hope to have a future in the country if political control remained in their hands, that Backeberg argued should similarly be regarded as the basis of the community's *Deutschtumsarbeit* (work to retain Germanness).⁹⁵

It was with this premise that Backeberg's speech put forward a new vision of South African Germanness and one that could no longer afford to distance itself from the political discourse of the country as it had done in the past:

⁹³ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 78.

⁹⁴ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 22-23.

⁹⁵ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 77-80.

Alle Deutschtumsarbeit in Südafrika hat nur dann einen Sinn, wenn sie in den deutschen Menschen die Bereitschaft auslöst, mitzutragen an der Verantwortung für dieses Land und seine geschichtliche Aufgabe. Ein bodenständiges Deutschtum in Südafrika wird nur insofern bleibenden Bestand haben als es wirklich zu einem Deutsch-Afrikanertum wird. Unsere besondere Verpflichtung: Verwurzelung und Verbundenheit.⁹⁶

All our efforts towards the development of Germanness in South Africa only have a purpose when it results in a willingness to assume its share of the responsibility for this country in accordance to its own historical purpose. The foundation of Germanness in South Africa will only have a lasting presence if it is able to become a German-Afrikanerdom in the true sense of the word. Our special duty in this regard: rootedness and connectedness. (Own Translation)

In making these observations, it is important to recognise that Backeberg's suggestions were markedly different to those sentiments that had been asserted by the Kroondal community in the years before the Second World War. Where these (pre-war South African communities) had mostly sought to identify themselves as *Afrikadeutsche* (African-Germans), Backeberg's specific reorientation of this term to read as *Deutschafrikaner*, places a telling emphasis on the word "Afrikaner" as opposed to that of *Deutsche*. This at a time when the newly incumbent nationalist government was intent on fostering "a single-minded loyalty to South Africa"⁹⁷ (that charged White South Africans to relinquish what remained of their expatriate identities), meant that Backeberg's words would have held a particular relevance to his audience. Even so, as much as Backeberg seemed intent on aligning the German South African community in support of the Apartheid nationalist's racially and patriotically motivated platform, he nevertheless also argued against the abandonment of their German heritage. This he stated, had found its own unique purpose in contributing to the development of South Africa and that German South Africans could embrace the identity of being "Afrikaners" without needing to discard their German heritage and thereby becoming "Afrikaans".⁹⁸

⁹⁶ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 66-69.

⁹⁷ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. p. 494.

⁹⁸ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 79-81.

As these questions of identity were brought to the fore during the 1952 Kroondal German Day, Backeberg's speech ended with what would prove to be an important prediction for the future. Levelling his final comments at the community's youth, he emphasised that in spite of even the best efforts to nurture and maintain the German language and culture, theirs would be a generation that would likely find it increasingly difficult to connect to their peers in Germany. This, he maintained, would be as a direct result of the war that had brought about a significant deepening in the intellectual development of Germany's youth and that would, therefore, also serve to set it apart from those who had not experienced the same. Little did he know that the truth of this prediction would soon come to bear but not in the manner, or at least, not in the specific nature of the circumstances that he might have guessed. Rather, it would be due to the racial policies of the Apartheid state - exactly those policies that he had found it necessary to endorse, that Kroondal's identity of Germanness would find itself increasingly at odds with the identity of the new (West) German state.⁹⁹ In the interim, however, there was little to suggest that these policies of increased South African racialism and white minority rule would, in the matter of only a few years lead to an international outcry over its increasingly brutal practice of discrimination. In fact, as the historian Giliomee explains, it would not be until the end of the 1950s that the overall tide of Western racism would begin to turn away from its general prejudice to favour a new approach of racial integration.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, while it is possible to suggest that (for German South Africans) the old sense of a supra-national German community had been momentarily buoyed by the altruism of the DAHA achievement, there were also the first signs to show that this would not be enough to facilitate the same nationalistic idealisation that had been its anchor in the past.

At exactly the time that the community of Kroondal were re-examining the niceties of what they believed it meant to be connected to both South Africa and Germany, Ida and Gussy Behrens were undertaking their own process of experiencing, first hand, the reality of the people and places that they had only ever heard about from others. Beginning with their flight northwards, the couple marvelled at the fact that their aircraft, one of the South African Airways's new Lockheed Constellations, had covered the five and a half thousand miles to Europe in a mere twenty three

⁹⁹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 81-82.

¹⁰⁰ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. p. 495.

hours.¹⁰¹ This, as opposed to the between one and three months that it had taken their parents to do the same by sea. Stopping at various points en route, the couple had disembarked for a little over an hour in the Palestinian city of Lydda, that had only recently been annexed into the newly created State of Israel.¹⁰² Here Gussy seemed surprised when he remarked that most of the Jews he encountered were blonde with “normal” noses, betraying something of the bias that had almost certainly been fuelled by the Nazi propaganda both before and during the war.¹⁰³ Then, after a few days in Rome to see the sights, the couple took the train to Switzerland where the Hotel Schatzalp, above Davos would be their home for the coming months. Situated one thousand eight hundred and sixty-five meters above sea level, the Hotel Schatzalp and its adjoining sanatorium boasted a range of modern medical facilities and the capacity to host up to two hundred patients. It was as one of these that Gussy Behrens began a regimen of daily “resting” as well as the regular “filling” of the lungs to correct the progression of the disease.¹⁰⁴ As for Ida, her days were spent in what she quickly came to regard as virtually abject idleness in which the tasks of cooking, cleaning and washing were all reserved for the resort staff - a pre-condition further accentuated by the fact that their hotel bill had to be paid in Swiss Franks.¹⁰⁵ Even so, for a woman who had spent her life engaged in the performance of domestic work, the glaring distinction of Switzerland’s racial demography, compared to that of South Africa, appeared to make a greater impression upon her still. In this respect, the degree to which racial tensions had become a normal part of her and Gussy’s lives in South Africa is made sufficiently clear when, in a letter home on 17 August 1951, Ida unashamedly mentions that both she and her husband were happy about the fact that since their departure they had not had to see or have anything to do with “Blacks”. In a similar vein, Ida continued that she was still not accustomed to the fact that in Switzerland all the domestic chores were done by white girls, but also admitted to the fact that the relationships between the (all white) staff and management of Schatzalp did not appear to be particularly easy either.¹⁰⁶

While Gussy Behrens’s treatment in Switzerland soon began to show the signs of a promising improvement in his condition, the couple eventually remained at Schatzalp

¹⁰¹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 57, 71.

¹⁰² J. McHugo, *A Concise History of the Arabs*. 2013. p. 182.

¹⁰³ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 57.

¹⁰⁴ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. pp. 72, 74; *Davos Schatzalp*. “History”. <<https://www.schatzalp.ch/en/htl/history/>>. Access: 10-09-2018.

¹⁰⁵ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1951-07-15, 1951-07-26, 1951-08-23.

¹⁰⁶ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1951-07-15.

for almost an entire year by which time the doctors were confident enough to give him their blessing to depart.¹⁰⁷ It was immediately after this period of convalescence, that Ida and Gussy used the opportunity to travel to various cities in Germany, concluding with a week-long stay in Hermannsburg that thereby amounted to something of a pilgrimage to the old *Heimat*. This they had hoped would begin with a trip to see Hitler's mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden, a decision that they, nevertheless, soon abandoned once informed that nothing of Hitler's presence had been allowed to remain there.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, embarking on a six-week long tour it is interesting to note that the couple often stayed with distant relations whom they had never met but with whom some connection had either been maintained or re-established over the course of their visit.¹⁰⁹ This was especially the case when they visited the city of Göttingen and the towns of Üzeln and Hermannsburg where Ida noted that she was struck by the similarities in the now extended family's general physical features.¹¹⁰ As for the towns and landscape of Germany itself, Ida's first reaction was one of excitement and disbelief that she was actually in Germany and that everything seemed so neat and orderly there. It was a delight that was, however, soon replaced by feelings of dismay when she began to encounter the signs of destruction that remained as evidence of the conflict that had ended only a few years before.¹¹¹ These, along with the tales of horror and loss that she heard from her new acquaintances reportedly left her feeling "utterly drained" as she was confronted by the reality of all she had imagined of the war's events.¹¹² However, there is also little to indicate that these experiences may have served to dampen her previous idealisation of the Nazi regime and instead, her letters merely give vent to a sense of indignation at the presence of the British occupation forces in the area. In doing so, she noted that Germany, as South Africa, now had its fair share of despised "khakis" or rather "tommies", as she explained the Germans chose to nickname their former adversaries.¹¹³ Furthermore, she mentions that she found it quite disturbing that many of the local German girls and children had struck up friendships with these soldiers.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt...* 1975. pp. 81, 83.

¹⁰⁸ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1952-06-07.

¹⁰⁹ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt...* 1975. p. 57; Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1951-09-16, 1951-09-17.

¹¹⁰ Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1951-10-09.

¹¹¹ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1951-10-09, 1951-10-10.

¹¹² Ida Behrens, Letter to Richard Behrens 1951-10-09.

¹¹³ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1951-09-16.

¹¹⁴ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard & Alma Behrens 1951-09-16; 1951-10-10.

By the time that Gussy and Ida Behrens arrived in Hermmansburg at the beginning of July 1952, it seems that the weeks of travelling had taken their toll and what was meant to be the highpoint of their trip appears to have been somewhat anti-climactic. At the centre of this experience was their plan to attend the annual HMS mission festival which they duly did over 9-10 July, but where their greatest excitement turned out to be meeting other acquaintances from the South African mission field. It is with this experience completed that the couple embarked upon their journey home, arriving back in South Africa on a Union Castle liner on 31 July.¹¹⁵ Therefore, reading Ida's last recorded letter to Richard in 1952, she notes that they had moved back into their new Kroondal home and that she had had some luck hiring a new "kitchenboy". The man, whom she only describes as wearing spectacles, appeared to have been doing well, even if she was also quick to point out that he was no "pearl" either, but that she hoped he might still become one.¹¹⁶

If the dynamics of inter-racial relations continued to be an important facet for the Behrens family in the years following the Second World War, then they were, nonetheless, far from being its principal focus over the course of this period. Instead, it was the tremendous energy that came to be directed towards the DAHA relief effort that must be seen as the primary focus for Kroondal during this time. Here, the desire to reaffirm their connection to Germany was at the forefront of the community's diasporic consciousness and it can well be argued that the drive to contribute humanitarian aid to Germany was as much a part of this desire as feelings of philanthropy might otherwise have been. This seems evident from individuals such as Ida Behrens, whose sense of duty towards the community of Kroondal had been transferred to include the greater, imagined community of Germans in Europe. It was an association that had not only been inherited from the previous generation but significantly enhanced by the ideology of National Socialism during the 1930s. In the same vein, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that for many Kroondalers the wholesale branding of the Nazi state as a perpetrator in crimes against humanity was difficult to accept. It follows that DAHA's focus on the suffering of the German people seems to have offered something of an alternative preoccupation than that of the horror that Nazism had been revealed to represent. Therefore, it was in the wake of their perceived exclusion from Germany along with a degree of seemingly wilful

¹¹⁵ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt...* 1975. p. 83; Ida Behrens, Letter to Alma Behrens 1952-08-01.

¹¹⁶ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1952-09-03.

ignorance that the German South African community had emerged determined to demonstrate their solidarity with the German people; one that would fuel their commitment to the DAHA initiative for close to a decade thereafter.

It is with this in mind that the DAHA relief effort must be seen as occupying a central role in facilitating the German South African population's transition into the post-war era. It was a transition that for a community such as Kroondal, represented a strongly conservative venture as it sought to reaffirm the nationalistic vision of Germanness that it had embraced in the past. This seems evident from the relatively scant attention that the Behrens family displayed towards South African events such as the 1948 election, choosing instead to preoccupy itself with the benefits that the changing dispensation might hold for the German internees facing deportation. And yet, by the beginning of the 1950s, the first signs of a new awareness in Kroondal of the changing realities of both South Africa and Europe began to be heard. In particular, it was the discussion that formed part of the 1952 Kroondal German day in which the importance of the German community's association to South Africa as its only legitimate political home began to be emphasised. In doing so, the conceptualisation of a new German-Afrikaner identity was given credence in which the community's cultural distinctiveness as a German population could no longer afford to separate itself from the white South African minority as a whole. It is in this vein that the next chapter discusses the continued development of this identity as it was reflected in the experiences of Hugo and Richard Behrens during the Apartheid period.

Chapter 8 *Eine Deutschtumsinsel - An Island of Germanness* 1954-1989

Barely a year after the end of the Second World War, the community of Kroondal gathered to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its Lutheran congregation. Speaking at its event, the community's head teacher, Tobias Wenhold, revelled in what he considered the Kroondal community's defining achievement, namely, the faithful continuation of its cultural heritage. Yet, at the same time, he also saw fit to issue the following warning for its future:

Ich weiss es, und ich freue mich, dass so viele unserer Gemeindeglieder sich freuen, dass wir hier unsere Vereine haben: - Schulverein mit Schule und Schülerheim, Posaunenchor, Gesangverein, Turnverein, Jugendvereine, Bücherei... Aber haben wir schon nachgedacht, dass diese schöne Vereine nur möglich sind, weil wir die Gemeinde haben, die in dieser Gegend dieses Landes in dem wir wohnen, als einzige Insel dasteht, umgeben von mancherlei Stürmen und Gefahren, die uns unterwühlen und von der Insel abbröckeln lassen wollen...

Die Gemeinde ist wie ein fester Rahmen, die viel Kostbares in sich birgt. Du und ich sind die Nieten in diesem Rahmen, die sich aneinander reihen und ihm Festigkeit geben, und wenn einiger diese Nieten sich lockern oder lockern lassen, so ziehen sie andere mit sich, bis dass der Rahmen nachgibt und alles, was er in sich geborgen hatte, zu Boden fällt, zerschellt und zertreten wird.¹

I am aware, and it pleases me to know, that so many of our community find joy in the fact that we have our associations here: - the School association with its school and hostel, brass ensemble, singing group, gymnastics group, youth group and library... However, have we ever considered that these lovely associations are only possible due to the fact that our community stands as a solitary island in the region; an island surrounded by storms and dangers that threaten to overwhelm us and that seek to separate us from its shores...

¹ Kroondal Archive. T. Wenhold., "50 Jahre Kirchengemeinde Kroondal 1896-1946. Jubiläumsfeier am 4. August 1946.

The community is like a tightly woven framework that holds within it many things of great value. You and I are the rivets in this structure that link together to give it stability. But, if some of these rivets begin to loosen or let themselves be loosened, then they begin to draw others along with them. This will continue until the framework collapses, dropping all that was entrusted to it to the ground where it will be smashed and trodden under foot.

(Own translation)

If Wenhold's depiction of Kroondal as an island of Germanness encapsulated the essence of the community's insular spirit, then his own life choices had done much to exemplify the nature of this ethos. As one of the Kroondal's school's best pupils, Wenhold had returned from university in 1926 whereupon he was soon entrusted with the position of the school's head teacher, a role that he would faithfully fulfil for the next forty years.² Thus, it was in significant contrast to his example that one of his own brightest students, Richard Behrens, had decided not to return to the community, choosing the prospects of what life at the University of Stellenbosch might have to offer instead. It is within the context of this growing tension, regarding Kroondal's efforts to shore-up its culturally German identity, that this chapter traces the community's development, as witnessed in the lives of the Behrens family, in the second half of the twentieth century. In doing so, the period between 1960 and 1989 is presented as the Chapter's primary focus, a period in which Kroondal not only reached the zenith of its size but, thereupon, also began to experience the consequences of its inevitable decline.

Third Generation: Family and Germany

When drawing upon the reminiscences of various Behrens family members, it has often been suggested that Richard Behrens harboured a sense of guilt over his decision not to return to Kroondal's fold.³ While this may well have been the case, his sense of duty towards the notion of Germanness, that included his commitment to the task of raising a German family, never seemed to waver. It was within this context that he and his wife, Irma, saw the birth of what would eventually number five children in Stellenbosch between 1952 and 1963. Of these, the first three, Gudrun, Ingrid and Karin were girls, before Richard welcomed the arrival of a son, Rolf, in 1958, followed by the birth of another daughter, Imke, in 1963. Here it is clear that

² H. Behrens & J. Wenhold (ed.), *Wenholdstreffen*. 1987. pp. 31-32.

³ Personal information: L. Ottermann, Altkroondal, Kroondal. 29 August, 2014; Personal information: R. Behrens, 16 June, 2015.

Richard had, at first, had his hopes set on the arrival of a boy, an expectation that was strong enough to prompt his mother to bemoan that baby girls were all too often met with the initial dismay of their fathers (*Mir tun die kleinen Mädels immer so leid, dass sie zuerst garnicht gewünscht sind...* / I always feel so sorry for the baby girls, given that they are at first not wanted).⁴ In a similar vein, Richard's brother, Hugo, had been just as adamant in setting his hopes on the fact that the arrival of his and Irene's firstborn in Kroondal would be a boy, only to have been disappointed when it turned out to be a girl, Helga, at the end of 1951. When the process repeated itself with the birth of another girl, Elsa, in 1953, Hugo's disappointment was such that it prompted his uncle, Heiny, to declare that he had suffered a *misoes* or failed harvest.⁵ While a baby boy, Ernst August, would eventually follow in 1955, along with the birth of three more children (Astrid, Birgit and Bernd Dieter) in the years thereafter, it is obvious enough that the expectations of gender roles had remained firmly entrenched within the Kroondal community at large.⁶

If Richard and Hugo Behrens shared the experience of starting their own families during the 1950s, then by the middle of that decade they would have gone on to share a further important venture, one that they had both dreamed about since childhood, namely the opportunity to visit Germany. It was a voyage that Hugo had arranged on the premise of furthering his business contacts abroad and to which end he had gifted his brother a ticket to join him in this experience. Therefore, departing towards the end of April and returning at the end of May, 1954, the two brothers had left their young families with their respective parents-in-law and flown to Europe for what they readily acknowledged amounted to something of a pilgrimage.⁷ This was quite evident from Richard's first letter home in which he detailed their flight north raving, "And then came Germany!!! And it is as wonderful as the most wonderful dream that I have ever had of it." (*Und dann kam Deutschland!!! Und es ist so schön wie der schönste Traum, den ich je davon gehabt habe*).⁸ As for Hugo, the experience of setting foot on what he regarded as his native soil was expressed in

⁴ Ida Behrens, Letters to Richard Behrens 1952-07-06.

⁵ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 68; R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 156.

⁶ H. Behrens, *Ein Kroondaler*. (unpublished). p. 68.; R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 156.

⁷ "Das Land unserer Vorfahren, Deutschland, welches uns fast heilig schien, erleben zu können, war immer mein größter Wunsch gewesen." / The chance to experience the land of our ancestors, Germany, that to us seemed almost holy, had always been my greatest wish" (own translation). H. Behrens, *Ein Kroondaler*. (unpublished). p. 70; R. Behrens, "Europareise mit Hugo, 23 April - 31 Mai 1954", (diary entry). 1954. p. 24.

⁸ Richard Behrens, Letters to Irma Schütte 1954-04-27 (1st of two letters).

even more emotive terms when he described a walk across the Lüneburger Heide to visit Hermannsburg as being akin to “treading on holy ground” (*Es war als ob unsere Füße heilige Erde betraten*).⁹ It is from these and other similar details that the brothers’ first experience of the “land of (their) forefathers”¹⁰ was clearly infused by a mythic depiction of Germany according to which they had been raised. However, what was just as evident is that where they, as South African Germans, had endeavoured to remain well informed of developments in Germany, the same could not be said to be true for the general German population’s awareness of life and events in South Africa. That this discrepancy even became comical at times was shown when, upon hearing that the brothers had arrived from South Africa, one stranger in Celle had remarked that he too had a relation in Africa and had enquired as to whether they might have come across him in Senegal. Other Germans had appeared utterly confused about the fact that the brothers were not Black and that if indeed this was their first trip to Germany, how it was possible that they were fluent in German. Therefore, it had been in another such exchange, this time upon Hugo’s departure from Hermannsburg, that a young and enthusiastic acquaintance had waved him goodbye with the words, “Send greetings to the dear Blacks” (*Grüß mir die lieben Schwarzen*).¹¹ It was a request that Hugo later recorded, left him feeling bemused and wondering whether (to his mind) there were in fact any (Blacks) who were deserving of such a favourable adjective. It is an exchange that highlights something of the discrepancy that had evolved between the ideals of the original HMS and the racial perspectives that had become the norm for its descendent communities.¹²

It is when seen within the context of Kroondal as a diasporic community that the Behrens brothers’ visit to Germany in 1954 can well be regarded as an important event in their affirmation of this identity. In doing so, both brothers kept detailed diaries of their trip along with sizeable collections of slides and photographs with which to document the experience.¹³ Yet, at the same time, it is notable that most of this material does not serve as an extensive source of personal reflection on their visit. Rather, it appears that, for the most part, these experiences were recorded with the intention of being able to relate a factual account of Germany to friends and

⁹ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). p. 70.

¹⁰ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). p. 70.

¹¹ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler” (unpublished). p. 72.

¹² H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). p. 72.

¹³ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). pp. 70-76.

relations, most of whom would never have had the opportunity to be able to undertake such a visit. As such, it can well be argued that the brothers' impressions of Germany were as much influenced by their desire to want to evidence and inform others of their stay, as it would have been to experience these places for themselves. This seems to have been at least part of Richard's motivation when, towards the end of their trip, he undertook a special visit to the site of Hitler's former residence at Berchtesgaden. This site that had held such an important place in the imaginations of many of his South African acquaintances and that he, therefore, also took considerable effort to describe in well over a page of his diary.¹⁴

By the time of the brothers' return to South Africa, and judging by the concluding remarks in each of their travel journals, it is fair to say that both Hugo and Richard Behrens had regarded their dream to see and experience Germany as having been fulfilled.¹⁵ And yet, as time would tell, it would prove to be only the first of various trips to Europe that both brothers would undertake in the years to follow, a development that unlike the generations before them would be made possible by the rapid advancements in air travel. Accordingly it was little more than five years after his return from Germany in 1954 and after twelve years as a lecturer at Stellenbosch University, that Richard Behrens was informed by his head of department that he would be eligible for a sabbatical in 1960. Seizing the opportunity, Richard determined to undertake a year of study in Frankfurt, Germany at the *Staatliche Hochschule für Musik* (University of Music and Performing Arts) where the renowned German organist, Helmut Walcha, was tenured.¹⁶ As a leading exponent of Bach's organ works, Walcha represented a remarkable personality in that, despite having been blinded at age nineteen, he had gone on to master the entire repertoire of Bach's organ works by memory.¹⁷ Therefore, it was with an eye towards experiencing Walcha's tutelage that Richard had chosen the *Staatliche Hochschule* as his preferred institution and written to Walcha (whom he had briefly met in 1954) asking permission to be able to attend some of his master classes.¹⁸ Where these requests were soon affirmed, much to Richard's delight, the venture

¹⁴ R. Behrens, "Europareise mit Hugo, 23 April - 31 Mai 1954", (diary entry). 1954. pp. 17-19.

¹⁵ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 70.; R. Behrens, "Europareise mit Hugo, 23 April - 31 Mai 1954", (diary entry). 1954. pp. 18-19.

¹⁶ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 151.

¹⁷ P. Jordan, "Helmut Walcha: Artist-Teacher". *College Music Symposium*. Vol. 22, no. 2. 1982. p. 148.

¹⁸ R. Behrens, "Erinnerungen an Helmut Walcha", (diary entry). p. 1.

was not without its quandary in that his family would not be able to join him for much of that year. It was a sacrifice that, as in 1954, would fall to his wife, Irma, and their children to have to facilitate. It followed that as Richard was making preparations for his departure to Germany, it was arranged that Irma and the children would relocate to Richard's parents in Kroondal.¹⁹

1960: The Reality of Race

The events of 1960 that will be addressed in the next segment of this chapter, represent an important part of this thesis, not only due to the fact that they draw upon the last (substantial) collection of written correspondence available to this study, but also because of the nature of events that occurred in South Africa's history over the course of that year. For its part, the bulk of this correspondence, that was conducted between husband and wife, Richard and Irma Behrens, spans between January and mid-June of 1960, before Irma (sans children) was able to join her husband in Europe for a summer vacation. While their correspondence would resume upon Irma's return to Kroondal, it is from the initial exchange of approximately one hundred and sixty letters that this segment obtains most of its information. Here it is notable that the letters written by Irma from Kroondal provide the most valuable insight into this period in which the rising tide of Black political frustration emerged as a dominant theme in Kroondal's society. At the same time, it is also evident from Irma's letters, the first of which was written on the night of Richard's departure on the evening of 3 January 1960, that the task of settling into her new life in Kroondal would be a significant adjustment, not least because of the work required to tend to her four young children. As a result, Irma's mother-in-law, Ida, made arrangements for a new nanny to be sourced from the local Tswana population. Thus, it was with Irma's growing association to her new employee that her letters provide us with a further window into the nature of Black and White relationships in Kroondal.

The arrival of the woman, known only as Christina, at the Behrens's *Steineck* home, was a matter of no small importance for Irma as shown by the almost twenty references that were made to her during the first two and a half months of their stay. Beginning with a fair degree of scepticism in a letter on 4 January, Irma explained that neither she nor Ida were convinced of Christina's abilities in spite of the fact that

¹⁹ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 151.

she had ironed well and had enjoyed playing with the children.²⁰ However, when these misgivings included a degree of cynicism a few days later, it is not inconceivable to assume that Irma was being influenced by the mistrustful opinion of her mother-in-law when she wrote:

*Das Kindermädchen (Christina) zeigt noch immer ihrer gute Seite - hoffentlich bleibt sie einigermaßen und wird die Sache nicht überdrüssig.*²¹

The nanny (Christina) is still showing her good side - hopefully she will stay for a while and will not become fed up with the task. (Own translation)

As for Christina, it is easy to imagine that her own experience of meeting her new employers (and of coming to terms with their expectations) would have been nerve racking to say the least. This especially given the fact that, as Irma went on to note, it was her (Christina's) first experience of such work and that she had initially seemed a bit overwhelmed.²² Either way, and in spite of these misgivings, it took little more than a week before Irma proved happy to abandon her concerns and began showering Christina with praise, as shown in another letter from 13 January:

*Das Kindermädchen gibt sich wirklich mühe und nimmt mir sehr viele Arbeiten ab. Du weißt ja garnicht wie schön aufgeräumt das Kinderzimmer jetzt immer ist. Auch unser Zimmer ist schön ordentlich und sauber.*²³

The nanny is really making an effort and reducing my workload a lot. You have no idea how nice and tidy the children's room has become. Our room is also neat and tidy. (Own translation)

That such sentiments soon became a regular feature in Irma's letters is clear, along with Irma's joy at noting the affection that began to develop between her youngest child, Rolf, and his new nanny. Therefore, when by the end of their first month in Kroondal, Irma glowingly referred to Christina as "a pearl", a term more commonly

²⁰ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-01-04.

²¹ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-01-07.

²² Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-01-04.

²³ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-01-13.

used by Ida Behrens, it is possible to assume that even her mother-in-law had likely allowed herself a positive opinion of their new nursemaid.²⁴

It was during this time, as the dynamics between Christina and the Behrens household were beginning to unfold, that Irma's letters also include a spectrum of other news relating to her and her children's acclimatisation to their new surroundings. While these included practicalities ranging from dentist appointments to bank accounts, they also featured the unmistakable sense of pride that the family exuded in relation to Richard's tenure in Germany as Irma's letter of 2 February explains:

*Vati und Mutti freuen sich darüber, auch Hugo, ich merke es immer, wie sehr sie es im Gespräch mit andern betonen. Es bedeutet ihnen auch so viel, daß du alles so schön beschreibst und erklärst und sie dadurch solchen Anteil dran haben.*²⁵

Father and mother find joy in it, as does Hugo, and I always notice how much they emphasise it in their discussions with others. It means a great deal to them that you describe and explain everything so well and that they are able to feel part of your experience. (Own translation)

That these emotions made an equal impression upon the children is notable when Irma describes how their three year old daughter, Karin, began to boast to strangers that her father was in Germany.²⁶ Even so, if such sense of pride regarding their father's absence offered some consolation to the children, it appears to have held little comfort for Irma for whom the pain of separation from both her husband and her home proved to be the most common topic of her letters. Thus, it was with some alarm that Irma recorded that her and the children's new equilibrium had been unsettled when Christina had failed to appear for work towards the end of January.²⁷

The episode that began with Christina's absence and escalated to an unknown, though seemingly difficult conclusion, appears to have been triggered by the unrequited attention of a former husband, who Irma relates, had followed and

²⁴ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-01-04.

²⁵ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-02-02.

²⁶ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-03-10; 1960-03-27.

²⁷ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-01-27.

threatened to kill Christina on her way to work. Forced to flee the assault, Christina had taken refuge at one of the outlying Kroondal farmers before arriving in tears at *Steineck*. Although the police were informed, the farmer, Werner Ottermann, who happened to be the husband to the youngest of Ida's children, Linda, had taken it upon himself to chase the man from the area, summarily banning him from being allowed to return. Relaying these events to Richard in her letter of 27 January, Irma was noticeably relieved that Christina had escaped harm and readily emphasised the appreciation that she had come to hold for her:

*Sie macht ihre Arbeit wirklich gut und wenn Rolf schläft so bietet sie sich auch immer an, Mutti zu helfen... Bin so erleichtert, daß sie hier ist und nicht irgendwo erschlagen liegt.*²⁸

She really does her work well and when Rolf has gone to sleep, she always offers to assist *Mutti* (Ida Behrens)... (I) am so relieved that she is here and not lying murdered somewhere. (Own translation)

And yet, as Irma also went on to admit, Christina had previously complained of being subject to harassment on her way to and from work, a claim that they (Irma and her parents-in-law) had simply dismissed as a ploy in the hope to be given quarters at *Steineck*.²⁹ Therefore, and in spite of numerous further positive references to Christina in her letters the week thereafter, Irma mentions that Christina's renewed request for a place to stay at *Steineck* on 9 February was, nevertheless, met with a firm refusal by her parents-in-law, explaining:

*Man hat so viel Last mit Negeren hier auf dem Hof nachts, denn sie ist sehr hinter den Männern her. Es gibt dann womöglich noch Schlägereien.*³⁰

One has so many problems with Negros who are allowed to stay on properties overnight. She (Christina) is constantly running after the men and it could well result in further fights. (Own translation)

While it is difficult, if not impossible, to adjudicate the exact nature of Christina's circumstances, what is clear is that Christina and her employers had significant

²⁸ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-01-27.

²⁹ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-01-27.

³⁰ Irma Schütte, Letters to Richard Behrens 1960-01-28; 1960-01-31; 1960-02-02; 1960-02-09.

differences in what they viewed as the accompanying benefits of her employment. For the Behrens household, the convenience of having an affordable, hardworking and dependable nursemaid was underpinned by the convenience of her departure at the end of every day. That this entailed Christina having to return to the segregated and comparatively impoverished workers quarters on the other end of the Kroondal property³¹ appears to have elicited scant regard - provided that she was ready to resume her duties the following day. For her part, Christina's hopes appear to have been set on some of the potential benefits that her association to the Behrens family might impart, including the relative convenience and security that servants' quarters on the *Steineck* property would have had to offer. That these (Christina's) expectations were so readily refuted appears to have come across as a cardinal injustice to her for whom, one would imagine, the intimacy of her work with the Behrens children may well have created a reasonable sense of belonging. It follows that the next two weeks appear to have been a period of persistent complaints by Christina, who insisted that the harassment by her former husband had not yet been resolved. In spite of these complaints, Irma was quite happy to continue her praise for Christina's abilities, describing how she (Irma) felt completely confident to relax when the children were in Christina's care.³² Yet, at the same time, Irma's letters also divulged the details of how her brother-in-law, Werner Ottermann, who was fluent in Setswana, had instigated proceedings with a "council" of Kroondal's (Batswana) workers to assist them in resolving the matter:

Wegen Christina hat er (Werner) jetzt seinen "Rat" zusammengerufen. Die haben beschlossen, daß, wenn sie gern hier arbeiten will, muß die Lollerei mit dem Zimmer aufhören. Sie schicken sie jeden Tag mit einem Jungen her, er holt sie abends auch ab, damit sie sich überzeugen können ob der Mann sie auch wirklich belästigt. Auf jeden Fall ist es Warnung, sonst wird ihr Kraal von Platz gejagt und Werner sagt, daß ist die größte Angst. Bis jetzt hat er noch keinen weggejagt, wenn der "Rat! Mit solch einer Warnung gekommen ist."³³

As regards Christina, (Werner) has now convened his "council". These have decided that if she wants to continue working here, then she must cease her

³¹ E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. 1996. p. 40.

³² Irma Schütte, Letters to Richard Behrens 1960-02-14.

³³ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-02-14.

quibbling about a room. They have begun sending a young man to accompany her here every day and to escort her back home in the evening to ascertain for themselves whether the man is really still harassing her. In any event it serves as a warning, otherwise she and her relations (*kraal*) will be chased off the property and Werner says that this is (their) biggest fear. Until now he has never had to evict anyone once the “council” has issued such a warning. (Own translation)

While the nature of this warning seems to have had its desired effect, given that Irma’s letters make no further mention of Christina’s grievances, it is interesting to note that this particular instrument of justice was based upon the ruling of a Black council in favour of their White employer. In this respect, it is obvious that the authority that was given to the council was in of itself, dependent upon its subservience to the expectations of the landowner. Likewise, the threat of eviction, that was not only levelled at the person accused, but their entire extended family, would have served as a potent mechanism with which to enforce the collective conformity of the farm’s tenants.

If such methods of pseudo self-governance may well have been employed in Kroondal before the election of the National Party government in 1948, then its enforcement was only strengthened by the nature of the Apartheid legislation that was produced in the decade that followed.³⁴ Among these were laws such as the Bantu Authorities and Prevention of Illegal Squatting Acts of 1951 that served to denude most Blacks of the right to reside outside of the “homelands” to which they had been assigned.³⁵ In its stead, the government expanded upon the use of pass laws that required Black men and women to carry a comprehensive set of identity documentation, or face the threat of arrest and imprisonment. Designed to coerce and control the movement of Black labour into “White” areas, these passes served as a constant source of humiliation to those required to carry them and, thereby, came to be regarded as an almost universal representation of Apartheid’s oppression.³⁶ That these measures had not simply been met with a sense of apathy among South Africa’s Black population was clear when in 1952, a campaign of defiant mass action and civil disobedience had been launched to challenge these

³⁴ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. p. 136.

³⁵ T. Davenport & C. Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*. 2000. p. 390.

³⁶ R. Schaefer, *Encyclopaedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society, Volume 1*. 2008. p. 83; R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. p. 136.

laws.³⁷ Therefore, it was in the escalation of these protests that further defiance campaigns were planned for 1960 by Black political organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the newly formed Pan African Congress (PAC).³⁸ Of these, it was the PAC that launched its pass law protests first on 21 March 1960, by drawing upon its support in townships outside of Cape Town, along with those situated in the Vaal region south of Johannesburg. However, when the mood of one of these protests (of approximately five thousand individuals) who had gathered around the police station in the settlement of Sharpeville grew strained, the police lost their nerve and opened fire, killing sixty-nine and wounding up to one hundred and eighty unarmed protestors in the process.³⁹

It was on the morning of the 22 March 1960, that Kroondal, along with the rest of the world, woke up to the first reports of the Sharpeville massacre. Tellingly, Irma's letter to Richard that day makes no mention of these events, rather, it was only in her next letter, written on 25 March that Irma first addresses the unfolding nature of the crisis:

Du hast wohl in den Neuigkeiten gehört von den Aufruhr in den Scharzen Lokationen - es ist wirklich nicht schön und gibt einen zu denken. Irma H. sagt, wie schlimm es in Van der Byl war. Die Dienstboten arbeiten zum Teil wieder und sagen ihrer Herrschaft, daß dieses der Anfang ist. Im Werk, usw. wird wohl nicht gearbeitet, es bleibt ruhig, aber "gespannt", auch in Langa (Kapstadt). Ja was uns noch alles blüht und hier gehst Du weg - aber naja, so oder so, man kann es ja nicht immer so gut haben, wie wir es bis jetzt hatten.⁴⁰

You have probably heard about the unrest in the Black locations in the news - it really is not nice and makes one think. Irma H. told us how bad it was in Van der Byl. Some of the domestic workers have started to work again and are telling their masters that this is only the beginning. Work has not resumed in industry, etc. it remains calm but "tense", also in Langa (Cape Town). Yes, what all might still transpire and with you gone - but, oh well, whichever way, one cannot always have it as good as we have had it till now.

³⁷ S. Ellis & T. Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid: The ANC & the South African Communist Party in Exile*. 1992. pp. 26-27.

³⁸ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 122-125.

³⁹ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 128-129.

⁴⁰ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-03-25.

As for Richard, his own letter, written in Germany on exactly the same day, also sought to address these events though in a far more puzzled nature, as he wondered how best to interpret the sudden and less than flattering attention that South Africa was being subjected to in the European media:

Regt Ihr Euch eigentlich sehr auf über die Aufstände am Rand? Hier ist es jeden Tag "head-line news" und im Radio und Überall wird nur davon gesprochen. Scheint ja auch wirklich schlimm zu sein.⁴¹

Is anyone alarmed about the uprisings on the Rand? Here it is "head-line news" every day and it is all that is spoken of on the radio and everywhere else. It does seem to be really bad. (Own translation)

Notably, it had been the presence of photojournalists and reporters in Sharpeville that had resulted in the details of these events finding their way to the front pages of the world's news. It was reporting that had left the South African government scrambling to justify the actions of its police service and which, more than any other protests before, had the immediate effect of placing the Apartheid system firmly into the international spotlight.⁴² It is here that Richard and Irma Behrens suddenly found themselves exposed to opposing viewpoints of the world's and South Africa's media as becomes apparent in their subsequent correspondence, beginning with Irma's letter on 31 March where the notion of 'communist agitation', as opposed to racial discrimination, is touted as an explanation for the crisis:

Ich bin unruhig der Fahrt wegen dieser Schwarzen Sache, man muß wirklich vorsichtig sein - kann mir denken wie sie alles im Ausland verdrehen - die Schwarzen werden durch Weiße (Kommunisten) angestachelt. Es ist wirklich schlimm und traurig - wenn ich abends dran denke so kommen die Nöte! Aber Hugo wird schon alles erzählen.⁴³

I am really uneasy about this situation with the Blacks, one really has to be careful - can only imagine how things are being twisted abroad - the Blacks are being goaded by Whites (communists). It is really terrible and sad.

⁴¹ Richard Behrens, Letter to Irma Schütte 1960-03-25.

⁴² T. Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences*. 2011. pp. 163, 228.

⁴³ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-03-31.

When I think about it at night it provokes anxiety! But Hugo will be able to explain everything to you. (Own translation)

While it seems clear that Irma's understanding of the event was being guided by those around her, including her brother-in-law, Hugo, it is also obvious that the emotion of fear played an important part in convincing her of her need to support the nationalist government as she goes on to explain in her next letter on 2 April:

Die Unruhen unter den Schwarzen (machen) einem doch Angst - man spricht hier fast nur darüber und im Radio ist das das Wichtigste. Die ganze "staande mag" ist aufgerufen worden, sie halten sich für alles bereit, also erwarten große Schwierigkeiten - Albert sagt, ihm wurde ganz unheimlich als ihnen auf der Straße die vielen Lorries voller Soldaten begegneten, alle nach Durban. Im Ganzen sind jetzt 36 Regimenter aufgerufen worden, außer "skietkommandos". Hugo weiß aber wohl mehr hiervon, immerhin, gut sieht es nicht aus. Ich habe aber doch Zutrauen zu der Regierung, vielleicht müssen sie mal richtig eingreifen. Einige Menschen können es einem aber auch so einreiben, es macht ihnen wohl Spaß, mich in Unruhe zu bringen.⁴⁴

The unrest among the Blacks does leave one with fear - it is almost all that is spoken about here and on the radio it is the most important issue. The whole standing army has been called up and are preparing themselves for any eventuality so they must be expecting lots of trouble - Albert says he was left quite unsettled when he passed the many trucks filled with soldiers all heading to Durban. In total, 36 regiments have been called up, but not yet the citizen force (skietkommandos). Hugo knows more about all this, but it does not look good. Nevertheless, I do have faith in the government, perhaps it is necessary that they really get stuck in. On the other hand, some people can really rub it in - they probably have fun unsettling me. (Own translation)

In turn, reading Richard's letters from Germany, it is clear that his view of events, as guided by both the German media and popular public opinion, was far less inclined to offer any such wholehearted endorsement of the South African government's actions:

⁴⁴ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-04-02.

Ich bin jetzt ja viel mehr in Sorge um Euch. Es sieht ja wirklich schlimm aus mit den Unruhen und man weiss nicht wie es noch ausgeht. Ob es gut geht, wenn man es wieder so gewaltsam unterdrückt? Hier sind alle in grosse Aufregung darüber und ich werde auf Schritt und Tritt angesprochen. Viel Sympathie findet die Regierung hier nicht. So aus der Ferne gesehen, weiss man auch nicht so recht, ob das Aufhetzen ganz richtig ist. Möge es doch nur ein gutes Ende nehmen.⁴⁵

I have now become far more concerned about you. The unrest really seems bad and one does not know how it may play out. Whether it will be beneficial to suppress it again with such force? Here everyone is up in arms about it and people approach me about it everywhere I go. The government is not receiving much sympathy here. Seen from afar, one does not really know if all this agitation is actually warranted. If only it would end well. (Own translation)

Then, just as Richard and Irma Behrens were still attempting to come to grips with these events, the news of an assassination attempt on the South African Prime Minister, H. F. Verwoerd, at the Rand Easter Show on 9 March 1960, arrived in Kroondal to the genuine shock of its inhabitants.⁴⁶ Although Verwoerd would go on to make a seemingly miraculous recovery, the incident further served to polarise the sentiments of the Kroondalers, as witnessed by Irma's increasingly determined support of the government's actions:

Hier ist wirklich große Aufregung, es war ein richtiger Schock als die Nachricht kam vom Attentat auf Dr. Verwoerd...immerhin, diese ganzen Unruhen unter den Schwarzen - jetzt ist ja alles unruhig - ich finde, Du kannst die Regierung nicht genug verteidigen, es ist einfach eine Schande was das Ausland sich alles erlaubt! Mein Blut kocht einfach!⁴⁷

There is an enormous uproar here, it was a real shock when the news came of the assassination attempt on Dr. Verwoerd...in any case, with this unrest amongst the Blacks - now everything is in a state of unrest - I think you cannot

⁴⁵ Richard Behrens, Letter to Irma Schütte 1960-04-01.

⁴⁶ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. 2003. pp. 522, 524; Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-04-10.

⁴⁷ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-04-10.

defend the government enough, it is simply a disgrace what the international community allows itself! My blood is simply boiling! (Own translation)

Going further, Irma mentions that her father-in-law, Gussy, was “full of fury” towards “those abroad” (*Er hat solche Wut auf das Ausland*),⁴⁸ and that, to her mind, the Black population were merely being influenced by communists. As if to reinforce this statement she notes that Black activists had been seen roaming the Rustenburg region, threatening any worker found carrying a pass book.⁴⁹ In response, she also noted that Kroondalers had removed their workers’ passes in an effort to protect them against these agitations but that on the whole, the biggest problem lay with the fact that the Black population were now convinced that the whole world supported them.⁵⁰

It was in the midst of these events that some of Irma’s last references to Christina are to be found when, on 15 April, she reported that Christina had been absent for three days and was said to be involved with numerous men.⁵¹ However, by the time that Christina returned to work on 20 April “after much annoyance and a long story”,⁵² Irma notes that the “unrest amongst the Blacks” had already begun to subside.⁵³ Even so, it remains unclear how long Christina would go on to remain in the Behrens’s employ given that only one further reference to her is made in Irma’s correspondence going forward. What is clear, however, is that whatever illusions there may have been regarding the semblance of a status quo ante between White and Black in South Africa, could now be considered to be a thing of the past.

1960-1970: Questions of Germanness

By the time that Richard Behrens had reached the end of his sabbatical in Europe, he received the surprising news that he had been appointed as head of the Conservatorium at Stellenbosch University. Therefore, it was with a degree of vindication regarding his long absence and a renewed sense of purpose that he returned to Stellenbosch, along with his wife and their children, at the beginning of 1961.⁵⁴ In doing so, Richard and his family left behind the settlement of Kroondal that

⁴⁸ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-04-10.

⁴⁹ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-04-10.

⁵⁰ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-04-12.

⁵¹ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-04-15.

⁵² Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-04-20.

⁵³ Irma Schütte, Letter to Richard Behrens 1960-04-15.

⁵⁴ R. Behrens, “E1960 - Studienurlaub im Europa”, (diary entry). 1960. p. 27.

by the end of the previous year had crested the mark of six hundred inhabitants, an almost thirty percent increase from the four hundred and twenty two individuals that had been recorded at the time that Richard had first departed its settlement in 1944.⁵⁵ While these numbers would continue to hover just on or below this mark for more than two decades thereafter, it is over the course of the next ten years that the Kroondal community would reach the zenith of its establishment. It was an expansion that came with its share of adjustments given that both the community's school and church had already been feeling the strain of the growing numbers for some time. As a result, the 1950s and 1960s brought with them a flurry of construction that included the building of a new school in 1952, followed by the collection of funds with which to build a new and enlarged church that was duly completed in 1962.⁵⁶ In keeping with its German tradition, the new church was not only afforded new bells, but also a new organ from Germany. The latter was based on a recommendation by Richard Behrens who was likewise given the honour of inaugurating it upon its installation in 1964.⁵⁷ On the wall of its entrance, the German artist, Elly Holm, (wife of the controversial wartime propagandist Erich Holm) was commissioned to inlay the figure of a farmer sowing seed (*der Sämann*) that would quickly become a well-known symbol of its congregation.⁵⁸ Matching these developments with an ambitious undertaking of his own was Hugo Behrens who had similarly decided to enlarge his shop by building an entirely new premises on the road leading out of Kroondal towards Rustenburg that same year. Taken together with the other broader developments of the time, such as the beginning of the settlement's electrification in 1953 and the conversion of the South African currency and measurements to the metric system in 1960, it seemed as though Kroondal had undergone the necessary adjustments that would enable it to continue in its way of life for the foreseeable future.⁵⁹

As much as the Kroondal community may have been able to adapt itself to the practicalities of its continued existence as a German enclave, there was one important aspect for which it seems to have been wholly unprepared, namely the changing sentiments and circumstances that had been taking place in Germany.

⁵⁵ Kroondal Church Archive. Kroondal Statistischer Berichten 1916-2005.

⁵⁶ E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. 1996. pp. 19, 57-59.

⁵⁷ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 99.

⁵⁸ E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. 1996. pp. 58, 69.

⁵⁹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 68, 84.

Starting in the aftermath of the Second World War, the first decade after Germany's defeat had seen it (West Germany) devote relatively little attention to foreign affairs as it immersed itself in the task of rebuilding its shattered country and economy;⁶⁰ This, all the while being faced with the growing reality that its nation would continue to be divided whilst in the grips of the Cold War in Europe. It was in relation to this position, along with its troubling legacy of Nazism and the Holocaust that the West German identity had begun to shift away from the ideology of nationalism and instead, sought to define itself as part of a "supra-national" (Western) European fraternity.⁶¹ It was a shift that had little genuine appeal to Kroondalers for whom the conceptualisation of German ethnic nationalism had been a core tenant of their identity, as evidenced in its efforts as part of the DAHA relief programme. On top of this, and despite the relatively close relationship that the West German government would maintain with its South African counterpart for much of the Apartheid period, the National Party's policy of racial discrimination proved to be increasingly irreconcilable to German officials and expatriates arriving in South Africa by 1960.⁶² Here it is through the collection of speeches from successive Kroondal German Day celebrations that the growing ideological disparity between Kroondal and Germany becomes especially apparent.

Beginning with the guest address of the retired West German Attorney General, Otto Stäcker, at the 1959 German Day, Stäcker's speech represents one of the first attempts to explain some of the circumstances that were responsible for the growing division between the German descendants of Kroondal and those residing in Germany itself, as reported in an article by the *Afrika-Post*:

Ein in der demokratischen Vorstellungswelt grossgewordener Mitteleuropäer - in seinem Fall also ein Bundesdeutscher - gehe von der Gleichheit aller aus, die Menschenantlitz tragen. Nach dem Grundgesetz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Art. III darf kein Mensch in der Bundesrepublik wegen seiner Rasse, seiner Religion und seines Geschlechtes eine Rechtsminderung erfahren...und seine südafrikanischen Zuhörer sollten sich deshalb nicht wundern, wenn ein Gast aus der Bundesrepublik, der in solchen

⁶⁰ J. McCormick, *European Union Politics*. 2015. p. 61.; M. von Bulow, *West Germany, Cold War Europe and the Algerian War*. 2016. p. 7.

⁶¹ P. O' Connell, *German Foreign Policy and National Identity Since 1945*. (Masters Dissertation) 2009. pp. 6-7, 20-21; U. Engel, *Germany's Africa Policy Revisited: Interests, Images and Incrementalism*. 2002. p. 104.

⁶² B. von Agnes Bressendorf, *West Germany, the Global South and the Cold War*. 2017. p. 80.

*Vorstellungen lebt, die Behandlung des Farbigenproblems in Südafrika zunächst nicht versteht und sich darüber wundert.*⁶³

For an individual raised in the democratic worldview of central Europe - in his (the speaker's) case as a citizen of the Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik*) - the view is that all human beings are to be considered equal. According to the third article of the constitution of the Federal Republic, no one in the *Bundesrepublik* may be discriminated against based on their race, their religion and their gender...and (the) South African audience should therefore not wonder why a guest from the *Bundesrepublik*, who lives in this context, cannot understand the South African approach to the Black problem and therefore seeks to question it. (Own translation)

Where Stäcker went on to explain that he himself had come to see the necessity of the Apartheid system - as the means with which to steward the “primitive” Black masses whilst guarding against the encroachment of communism - his words do represent an important acknowledgement of these differing opinions.⁶⁴ It is a point that he sought to emphasise when he observed that he had, as yet, not encountered a member of the Kroondal community who did not fully endorse the position of the South African (Apartheid) government. It is here that Stäcker concluded that the Kroondal German Day could hardly continue to be viewed as an expression of German national sentiments, but rather, should be seen as a celebration that merely sought to acknowledge the heritage of its German customs as part of the *Heimat* of their forebears.⁶⁵

It was as the German Days moved towards the mid and later 1960s that these topics of race, Germanness and identity began to build towards a peak. Adding to its discussion were the subtle challenges of a number of German representatives and ambassadors who increasingly took to articulating the nature of the discrepancies between their and that of Kroondal's purportedly “German” existence. This was evident when in 1964, German Ambassador Dr. Otto Burchard remarked that his experience of Kroondal left him feeling as though he was on an island and a

⁶³ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 91.

⁶⁴ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 92.

⁶⁵ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 92.

specifically “German island” at that.⁶⁶ However, as he went on to explain, Germany itself was no island and had to take cognisance of the changing global realities that included its need to foster amicable relationships with non-European peoples and particularly those in the developing world. In doing so, Burchard, as Stäcker before him, acknowledged that German South Africans did not always seem to be in agreement with what “those in (West) Germany” and especially those in its capital, Bonn, were doing.⁶⁷ Therefore, when by 1969, the next West German Ambassador, Dr Sonnenhol, opened his address with the statement that it was inevitable that “he would have a different opinion about some things as would South Africans”,⁶⁸ it only seemed to prepare the platform for the next speaker of that day, the German South African academic, Dr. F. Rädcl, who chose to counter Sonnenhol’s comments by expressing some concerns of his own at the recent “dangerous” developments in West Germany’s political landscape.⁶⁹ In particular, it was Rädcl’s first-hand experience of the pro-socialist 1968 student uprising in West German universities that seemed to leave him questioning Germany’s ability to provide an acceptable model of “German” values to the current (South African) generation:⁷⁰

Wenn wir als deutschsprachige Südafrikaner unsere Aufgabe als Verständnisträger zwischen zwei Völkern recht erfüllen wollten, so sei es unsere Pflicht, davon Kenntnis zu nehmen, dass das Land unserer Herkunft ein anderes geworden sei als unsere Vorfäter oder wir es verlassen haben, und uns mit seinen heutigen geistigen Strömungen auseinandersetzen.⁷¹

If we, as German speaking South Africans, are to be able to fulfil our role as mediators between two peoples, then it is our duty to take cognisance of the fact that the land of our origins has changed from what it was when we, or our forefathers departed from it, along with the need to distance ourselves from its current intellectual currents. (Own translation)

⁶⁶ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 105-106.

⁶⁷ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 106.

⁶⁸ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 126.

⁶⁹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 126.

⁷⁰ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 126-130.

⁷¹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 128.

While Rädels statement also touches upon one of the other important trends in recent German-South African thought, namely the imagined role of the German-South African communities as intermediaries between the two countries, the main focus of his speech was to offer an analysis for Germany's change. In doing so, Rädels reasoned that it was principally due to the effect of the Second World War that a schism had developed between those in Germany and their South African counterparts. Accordingly, he concluded that the events of the previous decades had served to favour the German South African population by leaving them unscathed from the social and psychological effects of the conflict as he went on to explain:

Unser Verhältnis zur Geschichte, zur Tradition und Staat, zum Alter und Autorität, zu Gott und Kirche ist noch weithin intakt. Unsere Vätergeneration ist frei von einem echten oder eingebildeten Schuldkomplex und kann daher freimütig mit der Jugend sprechen.⁷²

Our relationship to History, to tradition and the state, to our elders and to authority, to God and the church is still largely intact. Our father's generation is free of any real or imagined guilt complex and can therefore be frank in the way that it relates to the younger generation. (Own translation)

Where German South Africans such as Rädels undoubtedly regarded developments in Germany with a sense of disquiet, if not, indeed, a significant degree of disdain, then Rädels words and those of some of the speakers who were to follow make it clear that they increasingly viewed the custodianship of 'true' Germanness, as having been entrusted to their instead of Germany's hands. It was a sentiment that by the beginning of the 1970's seemed to have arrived at its fullest expression, just as both the Kroondal community's and the German Day's numbers reached their peaks. For Kroondal it was a number that was recorded at six hundred and forty individuals in 1970 while the total attendance at the 1973 German Day was estimated to be between 1600-1700 attendees.⁷³ It followed that the speeches made during this period and the years immediately thereafter, carry some of the strongest sentiments from the various German consuls and German South African speakers

⁷² H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 130.

⁷³ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 138.

alike. Among the most notable of these was none other than the former leader of the South African Nazi Party, Louis Weichardt, who was invited to address the gathering in 1972. As one of those who had been incarcerated under Smuts's United Party government during the Second World War, Weichardt had gone on to join the National Party's ranks to serve as a senator until his retirement in 1970.⁷⁴ However, as in other years, it was the attending West German Ambassador, in this instance, Mr. Eric Strätling, who was given the opportunity to address the crowd first, which he did by expressing his amazement at the sight and sound of German folk traditions being performed thousands of kilometres away from Germany. While the Ambassador went on to emphasise that "exaggerated nationalism no longer had a place in these times" (*Übertriebener Nationalismus...paßt nicht mehr in unsere Zeit*)⁷⁵ it was a message that was almost immediately met by the collective singing of the *Deutschlandlied* (German national anthem) before the main speaker of the day, Louis Weichardt took to the podium.

Reading Louis Weichardt's speech at the 1972 Kroondal German day, it seems that the retired senator was in a defiant mood when he began with the insistence that there was no reason to feel ashamed of Germany and that those visiting from the "old Heimat" should desist from the attempt "to disown their Germanness".⁷⁶ It was from this opening message that Weichardt made it clear that he would not shy away from politics and proceeded to argue that those in Germany had, in fact, retreated from their true values, values that he believed still to be alive and well amongst the German South African community:

Für manche ist das schwer zu verstehen Aber es ist heute ja schon so, daß man nach Südafrika kommen muß, um einen solchen Deutschen Tag zu erfahren, denn in Deutschland gibt es so etwas schon seit langem nicht mehr...Wir werden von der Welt nicht verstanden, ja, wir werden noch nicht einmal von einem großen Teil unserer Deutschen in der alten Heimat

⁷⁴ C. Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag*. 1998. p. 559; University of the Free State Kopsie Scholar, *Weichardt, Louis Theodor Inventory of documents*. <scholar.ufs.ac.za:8080/xmlui/handle/11660/8960> Access: 13 October 2018.

⁷⁵ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 136.

⁷⁶ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. pp. 136-137.

*verstanden. Aber vielleicht hängt das damit zusammen, daß man heute sehr selten von Kultur spricht sondern mehr von materiellen Dingen.*⁷⁷

For some this is difficult to understand, but today it is already a reality that one has to come to South Africa in order to experience such a German Day, because in Germany these sort of things have long since disappeared... We are not understood by the world, indeed, we are not even understood by a large portion of our Germans in the “old *Heimat*”. But, perhaps this has to do with the fact that today few talk about culture anymore as they are far more concerned with materialistic things. (Own translation)

As Weichardt thus made it plain, that there was “much in the present Germany” that he and others like him “disliked” (*uns vieles, was heute in Deutschland vorgeht, nicht gefällt*) what is even more clear is that, like Rädcl before him, he seemed to believe that true Germanness had fallen to communities such as Kroondal to maintain. While such critique would go on to be addressed by the next West German Ambassador, H. J. Eick, at the 1976 German Day, it was in the interim, at the 1975 German Day that the outgoing Ambassador, Strätling, paused to call for a minute’s silence to mark the passing of Gussy Behrens who had died of a heart attack earlier that year.⁷⁸ It was a passing that as with the generation before, provided a definitive point at which the next, third and fourth generations of Kroondal’s descendants now stood at the forefront of its community. It seemed fitting, therefore, that the following year, 1976, witnessed the new Ambassador issuing a firm challenge to the identity of the German South African community.⁷⁹ As in previous years, its critique would be directed towards the contentiousness of South African racial relations that had returned to world headlines through the events of the Soweto student uprising in June that year. This, having started as a form of measured resistance against the state’s policy of Bantu Education, had disintegrated into widespread violence when police had opened fire on the marchers, killing two youths in the process. As had been the case with Sharpeville before it, the violence had been captured by photojournalists and thereby placed before a horrified global audience.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 137.

⁷⁸ A.W. Behrens, *Unser Vater Erzählt....* 1975. p. 106.

⁷⁹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 147.

⁸⁰ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 142-143.

Thus, it was undoubtedly with these events in mind that Ambassador Eick began his message by expressing his amazement at how German South Africans could reconcile themselves with the unfolding circumstances in their country. In doing so, he not only sought to emphasise the scale of international attention that was being brought to bear on the Apartheid government, but, therein also expressed the concern that the conservative views of German speakers in South Africa might well be perceived as being representative of Germany as a whole:

Wir alle, die wir als Menschen deutscher Zunge im Ausland tätig sind, vertreten dabei unser Heimatland auch ohne dass wir dazu einen offiziellen Auftrag haben. Das verpflichtet uns dazu, dass wir uns mit dem heutigen Deutschland und seinen Lebensvorstellungen auseinandersetzen. Dass wir uns prüfen, ob das Deutschlandbild, dass wir selbst oder unsere Vorfahren einmal von drüben mitgebracht haben, noch stimmt. Und wenn es sich geändert hat, dass wir nach den Gründen fragen, warum es anders geworden ist. Vielleicht liegt es auch daran, dass wir uns selbst geändert haben in unserer neuen Umgebung, dass man sich auseinander gelebt hat, oder dass man selber stehen geblieben ist, wo sich drüben längst eine Entwicklungen und neue Erkenntnisse durchgesetzt haben.⁸¹

All of us, who speak the German language whilst living abroad, represent Germany (*Heimatland*) even if we have not been officially mandated to do so. It requires us to engage with and take cognisance of current perceptions in Germany. This so that we may ascertain whether the image of Germany that accompanied us, or that once accompanied our forefathers, is still accurate. And if it has changed, that we should ask ourselves why it has changed. Perhaps it also has to do with the fact that we ourselves have changed in our new environment, that we have grown apart, or that we ourselves have become stuck while the views of those abroad have long since been developed and adopted new insights. (Own translation)

If Eick's message made an appeal to German South Africans to re-examine what they believed Germanness to entail, it made no attempt to shy away from stating what by then had become fully apparent, namely, that Kroondal's perception of Germanness had ceased to be congruent with that of Germany itself. Here the

⁸¹ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 147.

immediate issues of race and Apartheid were merely symptomatic of a far larger disparity that extended all the way to the conceptualisation of Germany as a nation. As one German South African commentator pointed out, the local German speaking population had not yet come to terms with the fact that “Germany” no longer stood as such and that the terms “Bundesrepublik” and “DDR” (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik* / German Democratic Republic) needed to be used instead.⁸² It was a reality that was similarly seen to have resulted in the dissolution of Germany’s nationalist sentiments in which the idea of reunification was said to be dismissed by those in the Bundesrepublik as a “utopian dream”, or else viewed with suspicion as an unwanted form of “neo-nationalism”.⁸³

For many German South Africans, such sentiments seemed to be irreconcilable with the heritage that they felt they had been entrusted to preserve. It followed that for some, references to the “old *Heimat*” no longer appeared to be used as a synonym for Germany, but rather as a sentimental association to Germany as it had been in the past⁸⁴ - a place that they had known or in many cases, simply believed to have existed before the War. For these individuals, communities such as Kroondal now represented “a piece of the old *Heimat*” in which the “old customs” were still being “held to, practiced and defended”.⁸⁵ Either way, it was clear that by the 1970s, the identity of settlements such as Kroondal found themselves adrift from the changing realities in Europe and instead, had become firmly encamped in the conservative milieu of their “new” South African *Heimat*.

Fourth Generation: Germanness & Assimilation

As the degrees of Germanness, identity and association were being debated at the annual Kroondal German Days, there were many German speaking South Africans for whom such questions represented just another facet of everyday life. This was especially true for those families who no longer resided within the boundaries of settlements such as Kroondal, but whose lives had led them to integrate into the towns and cities of mainstream White South Africa. They were circumstances that can be said to be true for the family of Richard and Irma Behrens who were raising

⁸² K. von Delft, “Der Deutschsüdafrikaner in seinem Verhältnis zum heutigen Deutschland”. 1973. pp. 3-4.

⁸³ K. von Delft, “Der Deutschsüdafrikaner in seinem Verhältnis zum heutigen Deutschland”. 1973. pp. 3-4.

⁸⁴ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 150.

⁸⁵ H. Behrens, & H. Stäcker, (ed.), *Festschrift zum 50. Kroondaler Deutschen Tag 1920 bis 1981*. 1981. p. 150.

their five children in a newly built house in Welgelegen above Stellenbosch.⁸⁶ While the family spoke German at home and attended the newly established Stellenbosch German Lutheran Church, the children were sent to English and dual medium (English and Afrikaans) schools and, thereby, formed a close association with non-German speakers.⁸⁷ Indeed, it was with their integration into these parallel cultural-linguistic communities that Richard's children came to be influenced by a strong sense of dual identity as they moved through adolescence and into adulthood. It was, therefore, not surprising when the eldest daughter, Gudrun, married a non-German speaking South African, Antony Melck, in 1976 even while such a step was still virtually unheard of amongst her extended relations.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, this pattern would ultimately be repeated by the majority of her siblings when these similarly courted and married either English or Afrikaans speaking South Africans in the years that followed.

If the association to non-German speaking (White) South Africans had become a normal feature of life for the Behrens children in Stellenbosch, then this did not serve to preclude the strong association to Germanness that had been instilled in them either. For the second eldest daughter, Ingrid, it was a sense that, as she recalled, had been cultivated by growing up in a household in which everything that came from Germany had been idealised. It followed that upon finishing her degree in Occupational Therapy (OT) in 1976, she applied for and was granted a period of internship at a practice in Gailingen, southern Germany, where she planned to experience the country for herself. What followed was to be an eye-opener for the young graduate who had never left South Africa's shores and who, by her own admission, had never been given cause to consider the politics of her country's government. It was thus that her first memories of driving through Germany included being struck by the fact that the road workers she passed were White and not Black as was the norm in South Africa. Yet, as much as such a realisation (regarding the ideas of race and class) was soon placed into stark relief, it would be the reception of her new colleagues in Gailingen that would prove to be a greater realisation still. These, being well informed of events and politics in South Africa, represented a very different generation to those her father had encountered on his first visit to Germany

⁸⁶ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 156.

⁸⁷ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. p. 157.

⁸⁸ Personal information: Gudrun Melck (née Behrens), Pretoria. 2001.

in 1954. Thereby finding herself confronted about South Africa's *Apartheidpolitik* (Apartheid politics) on almost every turn, Ingrid recalled being "totally unprepared" for the strength of opposing opinion she had to learn to face in Germany. Not that such political discrepancies would prove to be the only differences either, as other new and challenging perceptions similarly came to be levelled at her. These included the younger generation's rebuttal of traditional marriage and gender roles as well as their often critical attitude towards religion that combined, left Ingrid feeling as though she was labelled as both "conservative and naive".⁸⁹

Where Ingrid's time in Germany and Europe proved to be a formative experience that would eventually lead her to question the morality of the Apartheid system, it also led her to conclude that in spite of her German heritage, she could not consider herself a German.⁹⁰ They were realisations that her younger brother, Rolf, had similarly arrived at over that same period, even if the basis for his realisations had come from a very different journey altogether. Having matriculated in Stellenbosch at the end of 1976, Rolf had faced the prospect, as all young White South African males, of having to complete a year of compulsory military service in the South African Defence Force.⁹¹ It was a requirement that had been introduced a decade before to meet the growing threat of armed liberation movements across southern Africa who were seeking an end to White minority rule. They were conflicts that by the beginning of the 1970s, had begun to escalate in the South African administered territory of South West Africa and in South Africa's northern neighbour, Rhodesia. Then, with the sudden Portuguese withdrawal from its colonies of Mozambique and Angola in 1975, the South African government increasingly found itself embroiled in liberation conflicts across the subcontinent.⁹² It was in relation to one of these conflicts, the Rhodesian civil or "Bush War", as it was colloquially known,⁹³ that Rolf came to be posted to the South African-Rhodesian border as a newly trained signaller in 1977. Tasked with monitoring and coordinating radio communications between the Rhodesian and South African military commands, Rolf's duties (as an English speaking and therefore Rhodesian sounding soldier) included sending a report of all Rhodesian radio traffic via telex to the SADF high command at Voortrekkerhoogte. That this included regular cross-border excursions to rendezvous

⁸⁹ Personal information: Ingrid Matthee (née Behrens), Cape Town. 4-2-2018.

⁹⁰ Personal information: Ingrid Matthee, Cape Town. 4-2-2018.

⁹¹ Personal information: Rolf Behrens, Paarl. 29-10-2017.

⁹² S. Onslow, *Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation*. p. 101.

⁹³ S. Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique: The Frelimo Renamo Struggle, 1977, 1992*. pp. 97-98.

with his Rhodesian counterparts in the exchange of radio codes meant that he was required to engage in covert operations, this in the light of South Africa's (American brokered) agreement to cease its cooperation with the Rhodesian government in 1976.⁹⁴ And it was in his experience of a number of such incursions, including one in which a member of his unit was killed in an ambush, that Rolf seriously began to question the legitimacy of these (SADF) actions. It followed that not long thereafter, Rolf made the extraordinary decision to desert the army by skipping camp in a food truck after having arranged for his post to be covered for by the remainder of his unit.⁹⁵

Hitchhiking back to Stellenbosch in January 1978, where he convinced his parents that he had been given an exemption by the army,⁹⁶ Rolf was able to enrol at Stellenbosch University which, on his father's suggestion, he did in the field of law. While it soon became obvious that academics, and law in particular, were not his field of interest, the arena of student politics certainly was and it did not take long before he began to assume prominent roles in several anti-Apartheid student campaigns. It was through his involvement in one such campaign, in the hope of changing the university's admissions policy to one based on merit alone (rather than race), that news of his activities found their way to his extended family in Kroondal.⁹⁷ From this point onward, Rolf recounts how his family visits to Kroondal often became difficult as his liberal standpoint became a bone of contention for many of the community's older generation. And, it was in no small part in reaction to the expectations of duty, tradition and conformity that Rolf's questioning attitude towards the South African policies of race and identity, moved him to an equally critical stance regarding the perception of his own Germanness.⁹⁸

1980s: Legacy & Decline

At the time that some of those amongst the fourth generation of the Behrens family were beginning to question the conservative identity of their German South African heritage, it was also a time that saw their parents trying to consolidate what they hoped would be a legacy of their own. For men such as Hugo and Richard Behrens,

⁹⁴ S. Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique: The Frelimo Renamo Struggle, 1977, 1992*. p. 98.

⁹⁵ Personal information: Rolf Behrens, Paarl. 29-10-2017.

⁹⁶ It would take a full decade before he was eventually arrested and tried for desertion from the SADF.

⁹⁷ *The Weekend Argus*, 1981-09-26. "Maties Verkrampstes sink Race Referendum" (Mike Hewitt); *Die Matie*, 1982-08-05. "Afstelling van referendum was triomf vir verligtes".

⁹⁸ Personal information: Rolf Behrens, Paarl. 6-6-2016; 29-10-2017.

this entailed the pursuit of significant building projects such as Hugo's decision to relocate and expand the Behrens shop in 1964.⁹⁹ As for Richard, his own aspirations had led to the construction of a new and celebrated Stellenbosch Conservatorium in 1978, that in some respects became his defining achievement.¹⁰⁰ And yet, for many of the Kroondal community, such grand and relatively individual achievements were not given room to be considered, let alone attempted.

This was especially true for the women whose lives had been relegated into acts of familial and communal service in the domains of *Kinder, Küche und Kirche* (Children, Kitchen and Church)¹⁰¹ that were considered appropriate for them. They were expectations that for those of the older generation such as Ida Behrens, had served to shape her life, but that towards the end, also appeared to have left her angry and embittered so that the final years of frailty before her death in 1980 proved to be difficult.¹⁰² Indeed, for a community in which the ethos of duty was prized over and above notions of individualism, any aspirations of legacy were typically sought in service to one of its numerous committees. Here, Hugo Behrens had taken pride in his involvement in virtually every area of the community's development that included long periods of service on the Kroondal school board, the German Day committee and the Kroondal church council. However, upon turning sixty in 1982, Hugo took the decision to step back from these duties that he had regarded as an important part of his life's work or *Lebensaufgabe*.¹⁰³ Instead, he was nominated to take up the role of *Ortsvorsteher*, a term akin to that of a village mayor, that he nevertheless described, as leaving him feeling "almost guilty" at his otherwise lack of involvement in the community's structures.¹⁰⁴

It was at this juncture, at the beginning of the 1980s, that Kroondal itself began to experience the first noticeable symptoms of a decline. Having started in the mid-1970s with a drop in the number of children at the school hostel, the overall numbers on the church registry also began to plateau around the same time. While these figures would briefly return to just over six hundred by the mid-1980s, the

⁹⁹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 101-102.

¹⁰⁰ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. pp. 152-153.

¹⁰¹ Kroondal Church Archive. Gemeindeversammlung 1989-1994. "Jahresversammlung 26 Januar 1992".

¹⁰² Personal information: Ingrid Matthee, Cape Town. 4-2-2018.

¹⁰³ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 137.

¹⁰⁴ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 137, 159.

statistics show it to be a last gasp before a year on year drop in its population set in by the end of the decade.¹⁰⁵ Ironically, it was the Hermannsburg Missionary Society that proved partly responsible for precipitating this change when the majority of its younger (post-war) missionaries proved themselves unwilling to commit to an indefinite expatriation to South Africa. Instead, these typically returned to Germany once their children reached a school-going age which not only reduced the numbers enrolled at the Kroondal school, but thereby too, the numbers of new and eligible marriage partners available to the community in the years thereafter.¹⁰⁶ Adding to this change was the likely factor that Kroondal had simply become a victim of its location and size as the limitations of its farmland meant that more of its members began to establish themselves in cities such as Rustenburg and Pretoria.¹⁰⁷ It was a move that was undoubtedly further accentuated when the region was afflicted by a severe drought between 1981 and 1984. Consequently, the community's records show that by the mid-1980s the principal reasons for the loss of Kroondal's members was their relocation to other (urban) German Lutheran communities.¹⁰⁸

Watching these changes unfold, Hugo was, nonetheless, grateful that his own legacy in the Behrens shop seemed to have been secured when in 1980, his son, Ernst August, had decided to join him in the family business. But, even here the times were beginning to change as the growth of Rustenburg chain-stores started to impact upon general dealerships such as those of the Behrens's Kroondal shop.¹⁰⁹ To make matters even worse, the chrome and platinum mines that had once been a welcome source of external income for the community, were now drawing ever nearer to Kroondal's doorstep. In doing so, the sight of mine dumps to the north and east of the settlement was beginning to compete with the once dominant slopes of the Magaliesberg to the south. It was on these same mountain slopes, that Hugo had already built a new home for his family in 1973 on land adjacent to his grandfather's old *Bergheim* farm. Naming this property *Bernfels*, Hugo's new home offered a commanding view of the plains to the north and with it a sense of space and sheltered distance from the traffic and industry below. It was here, on his mountain retreat, that Hugo attempted to fashion a romanticised vision of African Germanness in and around his home. Inspired, in part, by the alpine views and waterways he had

¹⁰⁵ Kroondal Church Archive. Kroondal Statistischer Berichte 1916-2005; T. Wenhold (et al.), 75 Jahre Kroondaler Schulverein 1979. p. 59.

¹⁰⁶ Personal information: Christa Meyer, Kroondal, 8-7-2015.

¹⁰⁷ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 161.

¹⁰⁸ Kroondal Church Archive. Kroondal Statistischer Berichte 1916-2005.

¹⁰⁹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 134-135.

seen on visits to Germany and Austria, the house had been built to incorporate a perennial mountain spring while the German artist, Elly Holm (who had previously adorned the Kroondal church with its mural) was commissioned to decorate the walls with a variety of scenes. Outside, a large flat stone on the way to the door was inscribed with lines from the German folk song, *Und in dem Schneegebirge* (“And in the Snow-mountains”) though with the word, “Magaliesberge” replacing the original’s location instead. As for the mountain beyond, Hugo similarly adorned a path leading up one of the Magaliesberg kloofs with large rock tablets, inscribed with the verses of the German poem, *Die schöne Müllerin* (The lovely maid of the mill).¹¹⁰ Taken together, they were installations that seemed to embody Hugo’s desire to etch the idea of Germanness into the African countryside, and so doing, imbue it with a lasting sense of permanence.

However, if Hugo Behrens appeared determined to infuse the surrounding landscape with a sense of his own German identity, then it would fall to yet another guest speaker, this time at the 1986 Kroondal German Day, to point out that it was the African environment and not the German population within it that had triumphed in the influence of its culture. The individual levelling this message was the outgoing head of the Pretoria German School, Hans Jürgen Becker, who as with those speakers before him, appeared to have few compunctions about speaking his mind to the Kroondal audience.¹¹¹ Beginning with a hard-hitting comparison between the impact of marital divorce and the identity of German expatriates, Becker suggested that as with all parental schisms, the separation of a “mother-tongue” from a “fatherland” invariably had a profound impact on the “children” - those of the subsequent generation. This even more so when the “mother (tongue)” had entered into a “second marriage” with a different “father(land)”. It was with this comparison established that Becker proceeded to unravel the notion of South African Germanness as an authentic legacy of Germany in Africa.

Becker used his insight of German grammar and vocabulary to paint a picture of German-South Africanness as a pseudo-German culture that was represented by the many contortions it had produced in the German language.¹¹² Here he turned his attention to Kroondal as a German “*Sprachinsel*” (language island) whose idiosyncrasies in its speech, he insisted, could not be defended as a dialect, but

¹¹⁰ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler” (unpublished). p. 117.

¹¹¹ H. Stäcker (ed.). *Die letzten Kroondaler Deutschen Tage*. 2005. p. 34.

¹¹² H. Stäcker (ed.). *Die letzten Kroondaler Deutschen Tage*. 2005. pp. 35-36.

rather should be seen as a complete “variant” of the German language. This, he explained, was due to the fact that the German vocabulary was no longer able to convey its original connotations to speakers whose “social and cultural environment” was entirely different to those living in Germany. Pressing this point, Becker insisted that whereas German South Africans may still have “sounded German”, the language that they spoke had long since ceased to be such. Instead, the appropriation of “foreign words”, “foreign meanings” and “sentence structures” betrayed what had ultimately also become a “foreign train of thought”.¹¹³ It was with these words that Becker insisted that even if the local German population still thought of themselves as being “more German than the Germans”, that they were, in fact, deficient in the cultural and linguistic foundations that would be required to support such a claim. And, that while the variations in language might appear quaint, these were actually “the symptoms of a sickness” that stemmed from having been severed from the cultural context needed to sustain the true value of its mother-tongue.¹¹⁴

If Becker’s words offered little by way of comfort to the identity of Kroondal, then neither did the approaching end of the decade. For a community that had aligned itself with the conservative politics of the Apartheid era, the effects of South Africa’s growing isolation in the world were beginning to have noticeable consequences. Begun with selected boycotts in various European countries as early as the 1950s and 1960s, the tide of international opinion had eventually grown into a flood of disinvestment by the mid to late 1980s.¹¹⁵ Here the involvement of members of the West German public is evidenced by a small collection of German anti-Apartheid pamphlets and correspondence that appears to have found its way to Kroondal by the 1970s.¹¹⁶ Even so, such measures are given virtually no attention in any of the community’s literary materials until Hugo Behrens began to note that by 1987, the increasingly high rate of inflation and interest rate hikes of up to 22% per annum were beginning to make profitable business almost unachievable.¹¹⁷ It was here, on the cusp of the tremendous change that was to follow in South African politics during the 1990s, that Kroondal celebrated the centenary of its establishment on 4 November, 1989. Presiding over these proceedings as the settlement’s

¹¹³ H. Stäcker (ed.). *Die letzten Kroondaler Deutschen Tage*. 2005. pp. 37-40.

¹¹⁴ H. Stäcker (ed.). *Die letzten Kroondaler Deutschen Tage*. 2005. pp. 37-40.

¹¹⁵ J. Vernon, *Modern Britain, 1750 to the Present*. 2017. p. 422; R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. p. 166.

¹¹⁶ Kroondal Church Archive. “Apartheid Kritik”.

¹¹⁷ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). p. 144.

Ortsvorsteher was Hugo Behrens who, as one of the enclave's most ardent advocates could also not escape the fact that he did so over a community in decline. It was a reality that he acknowledged in the closing of his address, as he looked ahead into what had become an increasingly uncertain future:

Und nun betreten wir das zweite Jahrhundert und wie sieht es heute in Kroondal aus? Vieles hat sich geändert. Es ist allgemein bekannt, dass heute nicht mehr auf kleiner Fläche gefarmt werden kann. Die ursprünglichen Höfe sind zu klein und können uns niemals, im Verhältnis, das liefern, was unsere Vorfahren herausgeholt haben... Ist unser liebes Kroondal überhaupt noch ein Bauerndorf? Wird es nicht erwürgt von den Minen um uns herum?... Und was hat die Strassenbehörde mit Kroondal vor? Die Autobahn soll demnächst quer durch Kroondal gebaut werden. Man ist bereits dabei die Minenstrasse quer durch die Ländereien zu verlegen. Obwohl sehr besorgt, sage ich doch wieder, "lasst auch uns den Mut nicht verlieren sondern - Dankbar rückwärts, mutig vorwärts und gläubig aufwärts schauen". Wir müssen aber nicht vergessen, dass unsere Vorfahren enorm fleissig gewesen sind, den Geber und den Gottesdienst nicht vernachlässigt haben und sich nicht so viel Freizeit und Vergnügen gegönnt haben, wie wir es tun. Im Hause des Landmessers Muhl hing ein Wandspruch und der hängt noch dort in Muhlshausen, der lautet:

*"Im Trauen unverdächtig
In Treue felsenhart,
In Liebe wundermächtig
Das ist die deutsche Art."*¹¹⁸

And now we are stepping into the second century, but how are things in Kroondal today? Much has changed. It is common knowledge that farming is no longer viable on a small scale. The original plots are too small and can never provide a living comparable to that which our forefathers had managed to wrest from them... Is our lovely Kroondal even still a farming village? Isn't it being smothered by the mines around us? ... And what does the road planning commission have in mind for Kroondal? The highway that is to come is due to be built straight through Kroondal. The road to the mines is already

¹¹⁸ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 161.

in the process of being re-routed across the farmland. While I am very concerned, I will say again, “let us too not lose hope but instead - look back with gratitude, forwards with courage and to the heavens with faith”.

But, we must also not forget that our forefathers were tremendously hard-working and that they did not allow themselves as much free-time and amusement as we do. In the house of the land-surveyor Muhl, there was an adage that hung on the wall and that still hangs in the Muhl’s house today, it says:

In trust it’s without doubt
In loyalty as hard as rock
In love it’s aw-inspiring
That is the German way
(Own translation)

The change that had become self-evident to those in Kroondal in 1989 would only be accentuated in the decade to come. Beginning with the divergence of political and social sentiments between Germany and South Africa following the Second World War, the events of Sharpeville in 1960 had served to wrest Kroondal from the peak of its diasporic identity. From this point onwards Kroondal’s Germanness became increasingly tenuous in its connection to the identity of Germany itself. Instead, the community clung to the idealised notion of Germany as it was perceived to have been in the past, and thereby too, of its own role in maintaining the nature of this identity into the future. Yet, for many of those of the next (fourth) generation, the realities of a changing environment meant that Kroondal was no longer able to sustain them as it had done their forebears. It is a development that is addressed in the thesis’s final chapter before the summation of its argument is presented in the Conclusion.

Chapter 9 *Rückgang - Decline* 1990-2014

In the year that Kroondal celebrated the centenary of its founding (1989), it also completed what might well prove to have been the last of its big building projects in the unveiling of its *Altkroondal* (old-Kroondal) old-age home. Positioned behind the parsonage and close to the northern boundary of the settlement, the *Altkroondal* complex had been designed around a frail-care centre that accommodated up to thirty five individuals along with twenty small semi-detached apartments for those still capable of independent living.¹ While it was a project that demonstrated the continuing nature of Kroondal's communal initiatives during the 1980s, it is also possible to see it as symbolic of a community that had passed its prime. With its numbers at still just over six hundred in 1986, the Kroondal congregation would drop to four hundred and ninety three individuals by 1996 - a decline that, put into perspective, effectively erased the preceding forty years of growth within the space of a single decade, reducing Kroondal to the same numbers it had had in 1950. When this was followed by the drop of yet another hundred individuals by 2004, the community's size would become equatable to the numbers it had maintained during the mid 1930s.² Here Kroondal's decline is most notable for the fact that increasing numbers of its younger generation were choosing not to remain in situ, with its statistics pointing to an average rate of departure of between ten and twenty of Kroondal's congregants per annum from the late 1980s onwards. Taken together with the associated slowing of its birth rate, the community reached its cross-over point by the mid 1990s when, on average, more of its congregants were dying than were being born each year.³ Not surprisingly, the Kroondal School Association was among the first to feel the effects of these changes with the result that by 1992, its school hostel was forced to close its doors due to the lack of students making use of its facilities.⁴ Where the school itself would continue despite the steady decline in its numbers, it provided a clear portent that the future of Kroondal's settlement was no longer assured.

A new South Africa

As the effects of a shrinking population began to take hold in Kroondal, the reality of much larger and far more dramatic changes were similarly beginning to be felt

¹ E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. 1996. pp. 61-62.

² Kroondal Church Archive. Kroondal Statistischer Berichte 1916-2005.

³ Kroondal Church Archive. Kroondal Statistischer Berichte 1916-2005.

⁴ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 164.

across South Africa when, in January 1990, its new President, F. W. de Klerk, announced the first steps in the dismantlement of the Apartheid system.⁵ Receiving this news with a sense of trepidation, Hugo Behrens had expressed his doubts at the likelihood of a successful transition to democracy in his autobiography.⁶ Indeed, when surveying the years between the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 and the beginning of South Africa's transition to democracy in 1990, Hugo's interaction with the region's Black community had been beset by numerous challenges. Of these, instances of crime and petty theft at the Behrens shop had become a regular occurrence while the oft mentioned inconsistency of staff attendance posed a significant challenge in its own right.⁷ They were problems that owed much of their origins to the brutality and outright exploitation of the Apartheid system that forced Black workers to reside and commute to and from the "Bantustans" such as Bophuthatswana in the then western Transvaal.⁸ While it cannot be argued that Hugo Behrens had remained in favour of segregationist policies, it is, nevertheless, notable that he had launched a fierce objection to the inefficiency of the Apartheid "homeland" laws by petitioning the government to be allowed to build accommodation for his employees nearby.⁹ Beginning in the mid-1970s and lasting almost five years, his petition was eventually granted in 1978 when he received approval to construct a worker's residence on the eastern side of the Kroondal property. Procuring this land and incurring significant further expenses to sink a borehole, as well as to have the site receive access to the local electricity grid, Hugo writes of his intention to establish a "model workers village" (*ein vorbildliches Arbeiterdörfchen*) comprised of ten family residences as well as twenty single rooms.¹⁰ Naming the site *Leshaba* (from the Tswana word for the river reeds found in the nearby Sandspruit stream) Hugo recalls how his idealistic (and in no small part paternalistic) intentions for the project began to wane when he was unable to enforce the sense of conformity and (Christian) morality that he believed his initiative would elicit. In the end, tired of policing the occupancies (and fidelities) of the *Leshaba*

⁵ R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 182-184.

⁶ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 167.

⁷ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 169-170.

⁸ H. Richardson, "Self-Determination, International Law and the South African Bantustan Policy". *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law* (17). 1978; R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa*. 2000. pp. 135-136.

⁹ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 133, 176.

¹⁰ H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). pp. 133-134.

residents, he recalls how he gradually preferred not to visit the site which had become “a big disappointment” to him.¹¹

Seen within a broader context, Hugo’s *Leshaba* “experiment” appears to have been representative of much of the rest of Kroondal’s engagement with the local Tswana population. Informed by the sense of conservative philanthropy that it had inherited from the HMS, Kroondal’s expectations of the Black community seem to have been as much about attempting to impart its own conceptualisations of life, work and religion upon its work force, as it was about keeping its population separate and distinct. Here the HMS’s concept of *Volkskirchen* or “ethnic churches” can be seen to have exerted a dominant role in Kroondal’s desire to facilitate the Tswana population’s adherence to the Lutheran faith, though not in such a way that might facilitate their actual inclusion in the German Lutheran church.¹² When these expectations of acculturation, without the prospects of assimilation, met with failure, it would appear that Kroondalers were often resigned to feelings of dismay at what they thereby perceived as a hurtful sense of ingratitude from these recipients.¹³ This appears to have been the case when, in the same year that Hugo Behrens undertook the *Leshaba* project, the Kroondal congregation likewise facilitated the creation of a new school for the children of the Batswana community in its employ. Built as a small complex of four class rooms along with an office building, the school was given the Setswana name *Tirelong* (place of business).¹⁴ However, when these facilities proved too small by 1987, the nearby Bayer-Leverkusen Mining company was recruited to sponsor an enlargement of the site, this especially given that many of their own labourers had also begun to make use of *Tirelong* for the schooling of their children. Once established, a number of Kroondal women with prior teaching experience began to offer supplementary lessons. Yet, by the time of South Africa’s new political dispensation in 1994, the nature of this relationship had soured so that by March 1995, the *Tirelong* principal informed the Kroondalers that their assistance was no longer desired.¹⁵

¹¹ H. Behrens, “Ein Kroondaler”. (unpublished). p. 134.

¹² H. Winkler, “The Divided Roots of Lutheranism in South Africa”. (Masters Dissertation). University of Cape Town. 1989. pp. 17-18.

¹³ H. Behrens, *Ein Kroondaler*. (unpublished). p. 134; E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. 1996. pp. 40-42.

¹⁴ E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. 1996. pp. 40-42.

¹⁵ Kroondal Church Archive. Jahresbericht und Statistik. “Bericht über die missionarischen und zwischenkirchlichen Dienst der Gemeinde Kroondal 1994-1995”; E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. 1996. pp. 40-42.

It was as the settlement moved into this changing reality that Kroondal found itself struggling to adjust to what it readily acknowledged amounted to an *Umbruchzeit* (a time of upheaval).¹⁶ Not surprisingly, conservatism remained prominent within the community as when strong objections were voiced when an attempt was made to combine German and Afrikaans church services in 1991, insisting that the language of Kroondal's church should remain German alone. While other calls for change were more successful, as when the first woman was elected to the Kroondal Church council in 1993,¹⁷ the attempt by a new German pastor in 1998 to forge closer ties between Kroondal's German and Tswana congregations was again met with dogged resistance.¹⁸ Yet, for all its conservatism, the signs of change were inescapable and in 1996, the last of the Kroondal German Days was held on the *Bergheim* farm, ending what had been an unbroken run of forty four years since its reinstatement after the Second World War. For the Behrens family, the nature of such change was made more visceral still when by the end of 1999 it was decided that the Aug Behrens shop could no longer continue on its own and, so-doing, entered into the OK group's store franchise. It was a development that resulted in the retrenchment of significant numbers of the shop's personnel and, thereby, effectively brought to an end ninety-four years of its independent existence in the Kroondal settlement.

In comparison to the Behrens family in Kroondal, who had experienced the changing dispensations of South Africa's politics from amidst the rural landscape of the Rustenburg region, the family of Richard Behrens in Stellenbosch had had a very different experience of this time. For Professor Richard Behrens, the eventual decision to resign his tenure at the University of Stellenbosch in 1988 had brought to an end forty years of his employment at this institution. In its stead, he had applied and been appointed as cultural attache to the South African embassy in Austria beginning in May 1988 till April 1992, where he was among the first South Africans to journey across the "iron curtain" to the old cultural capitals of Eastern Europe. It was an unforgettable experience for a man who had devoted his life to music and for whom these additional years in Europe represented the culmination of his life's

¹⁶ Kroondal Church Archive. Gemeindeversammlung 1989-1994. "Jahresversammlung 27 Januar 1991".

¹⁷ Kroondal Church Archive. Gemeindeversammlung 1989-1994. "Jahresversammlung 26 Januar 1992"; E. Penzhorn, (ed.), *100 Jahre. Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Kroondal, 1896 bis 1996*. 1996. p. 32.

¹⁸ Personal information: Christa Meyer, Kroondal. 7-8-2015.

passion.¹⁹ However, returning to South Africa, to a country in the midst of flux, his exposure to the tumultuous events of the early 1990s was generally limited to the medium of the nightly news on television. Here, discussions with his son, Rolf, helped to broaden his insight beyond that which could otherwise be gleaned from the perspective of the state controlled SABC news. As it was, Rolf's abscondment from the South African military in 1979 and his involvement in student politics had led him to forge a career in photojournalism by 1985. Working for the British television channel, ITN, he had spent the next decade recording the turbulent events of South Africa's state of emergency and the on-going violence that had plagued much of the country during its troubled transition period.²⁰ That this had included regular contact with some of the exiled leadership of the ANC in Zambia and frequent instances of his arrest by the South African police was largely kept from his concerned parents. Eventually, however, Rolf's repeated scrapes with the law caught up with him and in 1989 he was traced by the SADF's military police and tried for desertion.²¹ While the sentence was reduced to a fine, along with a series of compulsory military camps, the adventurous nature of Rolf's career proved to be the furthest extent to which Richard and Irma Behrens experienced the upheavals in the transition to the New South Africa. Rather, and true to Richard's character, it was his devotion to music, over and above any particular interest in politics, that eventually found its way into the last pages of his comparatively brief autobiography when, in 1996, he was asked to intervene in the impending dissolution of the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra. Taking on this task, he duly oversaw its merger with the likewise cash strapped Cape Philharmonic Orchestra to form a combined, though substantially reduced Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra in 1997.

A last reunion

It was at the turn of the millennium, on the occasion of Richard's seventy fifth birthday that the Behrens brothers saw each other for what would be the last time. Gathering in Kroondal for what also proved to be Richard's last visit to the settlement, the siblings shared a picnic with their families at the nearby Olifantsnek dam. By then, the Kroondal settlement had little to offer, other than the nostalgia of the old church and the community's cemetery, while across the road the original Behrens shop, in front of the *Rosenhof* house had since been converted into a liquor

¹⁹ R. Behrens, "Brotlose Kunst füllt ein Leben", *Geschichten die das Leben Schreibt*. H. Stäcker (ed.). 1998. Kroondal. pp. 153-155.

²⁰ Personal information: Rolf Behrens, Paarl. 28-10-2017.

²¹ Personal information: Rolf Behrens, Paarl. 16-6-2015.

store.²² Indeed, a few months after their meeting, construction began on the new N4 highway that had been routed only a hundred metres south of the *Ortschaft*. Once completed, the only hint of the existence of Kroondal lay in the fact that its name had been used for the off-ramp that marked the toll gate at its location. As for its inhabitants, few still lived in the settlement and where there had once been up to thirty families farming in the surrounding area, only three would remain a decade later.²³ In fact, as the numbers of congregants began to dip below four hundred in 2004, the church report for 2005 notes that while it had only offered seven Afrikaans language services that year, these had averaged the same number of participants as those of the more than fifty German services over the same period.²⁴ Thus it followed that soon thereafter, both the Kroondal church and school began to offer Afrikaans as a dual medium and so doing, to produce the measures that would help stem the year on year decline.²⁵

What remains of Kroondal today is little more than transient. Hemmed in by the highway to the south, the growth of Rustenburg's suburbs to the west and mines to the north, the settlement barely manages to cling to the rural nature of its origins. Even the ground below it has been hollowed out in the pursuit of minerals so that in the still of night, the tremors of the mines rattle the windows of the *Altkroondal* complex. For Richard and Hugo Behrens their own decline seemed to follow suit and after a fall and growing dementia, Richard Behrens's passed away in Paarl on 14 September 2014. He lies buried next to his wife Irma in the Lutheran cemetery in Stellenbosch. His brother, Hugo, followed a year later on 23 September 2015 whereupon his ashes were interned in his wife's grave in Kroondal.

²² H. Behrens, "Ein Kroondaler". (unpublished). p. 166.

²³ Personal information: Linda Otterman, Altkroondal. 10-7-2015.

²⁴ Kroondal Church Archive. Kroondal Statistischer Berichte 1916-2005.

²⁵ Personal information: Linda Otterman, Altkroondal. 10-7-2015.

Conclusion

...integration into a host (or majority) culture occurs on an individual basis; that is, individuals assimilate to varying degrees, while entire ethnic communities generally do not, as a group.¹

The history of the community of Kroondal, that was characterised by the attempt to maintain an identity of Germanness amongst its members, can be regarded as a combination of individual and communal processes. On the one hand, the decisions to emigrate, as too the decisions to begin to assimilate, are all choices that can be ascribed to the actions of individuals. On the other, these individuals were always also operating within the context of the societal circumstances of the time. It follows that the study of immigration, identity and assimilation all benefit from the contextualised accounts of individuals, and as such, the necessary inclusion of some form of biography.

It is with this premise in mind that the conclusions of this thesis are drawn, based upon the accounts of more than three generations of the Behrens family in South Africa. In doing so, it is maintained that the Behrens family's history, as part of the history of the German South African community of Kroondal, was shaped by the emergence of a distinctly diasporic identity. Beginning with the arrival of the HMS during the mid-nineteenth century, the thesis supports the argument that the HMS can well be regarded as the single most important influence in the initial development of a distinctive German South African minority.² Crucially, this was not due to either the timing of its arrival (the HMS not being the first example of organised German immigration to the region), or the number of any single group of immigrants arriving, but rather the fact that the influx of those associated with its organisation continued virtually unabated, year on year, for decades to come. What is more, at a time before the existence of a German nation state (and the creation of a German foreign office or *Auswärtiges Amt*) the HMS not only facilitated the immigration of Germans to Africa, but once there, fostered their continued connection to their former homeland. This was a connection exemplified by the fact that the HMS's descendant congregations remained part of the HMS synod and, thereby, also under the oversight of its directorship in Hermannsburg (Germany), this

¹ K. O'Donnell, R. Bridenthal & N. Reagin (ed.), *The Heimat Abroad. The Boundaries of Germanness*. 2008. p. 5.

² H. J. Oschadleus, *Lutherans, Germans: Hermannsburgers*. *Natalita* 22. 1992. pp. 27, 37.

until the relationship was officially ended in 1911. When taken together with the HMS's original intention to foster the creation of a pious (German) Christian community in Africa, it becomes evident that the HMS had, in effect, married the concept of its religious mission with the express intention not to assimilate. It followed that for those who arrived in association with the HMS, its organisation provided the framework of an ethnic and religious identity that was intended to be continued in partnership with the HMS in Germany for generations to come.

It is with these factors in mind that the establishment of German HMS communities in southern Africa can be thought of less as an immigration, and more as an example of what in effect constituted a translocation of a relatively homogenous German community to Africa. Indeed, where the HMS's venture to Africa occurred in the midst of the mass migration of nineteenth century German populations, there have been few attempts to appraise to what extent the success of this venture was due to the overall trend of these movements. What is evident, however, is that as with other examples of nineteenth century German migration around the world, the HMS community in Africa displayed a desire to maintain the conservative agrarian lifestyle that had become threatened in Germany.

Where it is maintained in this thesis that the ethnic and religious conservatism of the HMS's descendant communities represented a precursor to the diasporic nationalism that was to follow, it is also observed that for communities such as Kroondal, their rapid association to German nationalism should not be thought of as a foregone conclusion. Instead, the history of Kroondal attests to the fact that its community's appropriation of German nationalist sentiments occurred gradually over a period of approximately two decades before these were finally drawn into full partisanship by the outbreak of the First World War. As such, the years between 1890-1910 can be thought of as a period of transition in which Kroondal not only experienced the upheaval of the South African War, but the influences of various competing and at times nascent nationalisms. Other than the influence of British imperialism, these included the stirrings of Afrikaner nationalism and by 1910, the beginnings of a fragile South Africanism following the Union of the region's four colonies. It was amidst the realities of these shifting political influences that Germany's *Weltpolitik* made its own impression upon the local German community when the German consulate facilitated the release of its members from concentration camps during the SAW. However, it was with the institution of the German School Association of Kroondal in 1903 that the growing influence of

German imperialism became most pronounced. Here the allocation of funds to the Kroondal school, first via the German Colonial Society (1904) and thereafter the German Consulate (1913), created an important precedent whereby the German state rather than the HMS assumed the role of the Kroondal community's most prominent benefactor. In turn, the community's appropriation of German nationalist sentiments, as represented through the use of the word *Deutschtum* or Germanness, only becomes noticeable in the community's psyche from this point onwards.

While the years immediately before and after the turn of the twentieth century were significant to Kroondal's growing identification with the precepts of a diasporic German nationalism, it was also a period that heralded an important shift in the community's relationship to the local Black African community. Having initially been characterised by a firm degree of economic symbiosis, the first HMS missionaries (to the ZAR) had procured land in trust for local tribes, while they themselves benefitted from both the tithing and labour of their congregants. When taken together with the first HMS missionaries' attempts to shield their congregants from the abuse of local White landowners, the nature of the HMS's relationship to the local Black communities can be regarded as being feudal in many respects. However, with the adoption of commercial farming practices by the majority of the HMS's descendants, the overall trend in the German minority's relationship towards Black Africans likewise soon began to be determined by a market-related emphasis on the procurement of labour instead. On top of this, the fact that many HMS missionaries were not welcomed back by their former congregants following the cessation of the SAW, appears to have contributed to a general shift away from the prior spirit of cooperation and interdependence. In its stead, the beginning of the twentieth century saw the HMS and its descendants increasingly favour the same conservative attitudes to race that had long since become a feature of Black and White interaction across the region.

As much as the first decade following the SAW proved to be important to the development of a German South African identity in Kroondal, the extent to which its community appropriated the notion of diasporic Germanness is mostly related to the events of the First World War. Beginning with the South African government's internship of German nationals in 1914 and a spate of anti-German riots soon thereafter, the German community were left with the sense that they were regarded as potential enemies by their adopted country. However, despite what appears to have been an initial degree of restraint, it is notable that by 1916 the community of

Kroondal began to express strong feelings of solidarity with co-ethnic members around the world. Here the influence of Kroondal's new pastor, the HMS Missionary Johannes von Zwierring, played an important role in shepherding the community's response to these events. In doing so, von Zwierring seems to represent a generation of HMS missionaries and pastors whose strong allegiance to the German nation state likely facilitated their German South African communities' sense of diasporic Germanness. It is an aspect that represents a worthwhile avenue for future research that, based upon a wider sampling of German South African congregations, would offer important insight into the role of pastors in the construction of a diasporic German South African identity. Either way, what is evident in the case of Kroondal is that the end of the war witnessed an outpouring of nationalistic sentiments that had not only been triggered, but also stifled by the partisan nature of its conflict. This included the collection of aid for affected German populations as well as the institution of various clubs and societies with the intention of furthering the German language and culture. As such, it was during this period of piqued German nationalism immediately after the First World War, that Kroondal's identification with the notion of a supra-national German *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* (community with a shared destiny') becomes fully evident.

Among the examples that highlight the rise to prominence of German nationalist sentiments during this period was the institution of an annual Kroondal German Day in 1919. Founded by the Behrens family, the sentiments and popularity of its gatherings provide a unique degree of insight into both the growth and eventual decline of the community's diasporic identity. As such, the first Kroondal German days displayed a strong emphasis on what was perceived as the tragedy of the German *Kaiserreich's* collapse, along with the desire to see Germany returned to its former glory. Accordingly, the display of the old imperial flag and the singing of the imperial anthem attest to the community's generally dismissive attitude towards the newly formed German Weimar Republic. Instead, it would seem that having accepted the notion of the German *Kaiserreich* as the custodian of Germanness, the community of Kroondal naturally bestowed upon it the same sense of loyalty that it had once given to the HMS. Thus, where the first HMS missionaries and colonists had regarded it their duty to serve as the HMS's representatives in Africa, their descendants naturally transferred the same sense of duty to the social and political aspirations of the Imperial German state.

It was with this sense of hope in the re-emergence of a strong Germany that the community of Kroondal welcomed the news of the Nazi Party's ascent to power during the 1930s. While it is not possible to present evidence in the thesis on the extent to which Kroondalers knew of, or supported the Nazi Party's tactics before Hitler's appointment as chancellor, their enthusiasm for his platform is well documented in the 1933 German Day records. Likewise, the community responded enthusiastically to the Nazi Party's efforts to promote the idea of an ethnic, transnational German *Volksgemeinschaft* in which the notion of Germanness was conferred according to descent rather than according to citizenship of any particular state. It was an ethnic-centred nationalism that had a direct appeal to Kroondal's sense of diasporic Germanness, and for none more so than for its younger generations for whom Germany had only ever been represented as an almost intangible ideal. Fuelled by Nazi propaganda and the idealisation of all things German, the advocacy of Kroondal's younger members' making an effort to return, if only once, to see the "old *Heimat*" was a significant factor in the continued growth of its diasporic consciousness. Here the diary entries of Hugo Behrens as the family's third generation, are of particular value in displaying the extent to which these sentiments were internalised to give rise to Hugo's hopes of being able to move to a restored German territory in Africa.

Yet, while many among Kroondal's community were convinced in their support for the Nazi state, others and particularly those among the older generation of HMS missionaries left important evidence of a growing sense of disquiet towards the aggressive and anti-Christian elements of the Nazi regime. The unpublished diary of the HMS Missionary Heinrich Behrens's return to Germany in 1935 portrays how his initial sense of interest and even enthusiasm towards the Nazi state had turned to emotions of disgust and concern by the end of his stay. In doing so, it is possible to suggest that the pervasive influence of Nazi propaganda was relatively successful in its efforts to deflect the German South African population's attention away from the climate of fear and oppression that dominated the reality of life in Germany. However, for those willing to pay attention, the emergence of German anti-Nazi sentiment in South Africa such as that put forward by the periodical, *Deutsche Afrika-Post*, highlights that Nazism was not universally accepted by the German South African population per se.

Where it is possible to conclude that Nazism had a mixed reception among the German South African community, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests

that support for the Nazi state in Kroondal remained strong throughout the Second World War. However, as in the case of the First World War, the community exercised a significant degree of restraint in the display of its Germanness and, were it not for the collection of Behrens family correspondence and autobiographies, little else would be known about this period in the community's history. Commencing in 1944, the brothers, Hugo and Richard Behrens's correspondence home from Stellenbosch shows the extent to which the identity of Germanness prompted those amongst Kroondal's third generation to eschew, whenever possible, the company of non-Germans during their time at university. In turn, the letters from their mother, Ida, provide a vivid portrait of the depth of association that Kroondal's community maintained towards the German population as these began to suffer from the effects of the war. This includes the description of the memorial service that was held in the Behrens home to commemorate Hitler's death in May 1945. However, as in the case of the previous world war, it was in the immediate aftermath of the conflict that the true extent of Kroondal's diasporic association to Germany becomes clear as its community devoted itself to the re-instituted DAHA relief effort. Lasting close to a decade, the community's efforts to contribute thousands of pounds worth of relief materials and willingness to host German internees speak volumes about its intention to retain its sense of connection to the German people and the concept of Germanness. Yet, at the same time, it is also suggested in this thesis that the Kroondal community's tremendous focus on the DAHA relief effort, in some respect, served as an alternative focus to the uncomfortable reality following the revelations of the Nazi atrocities.

As much as the DAHA relief effort can be regarded as a peak in Kroondal's diasporic identity, it also signalled a period from which point on, the notion of Kroondal's Germanness began to grow increasingly estranged from the identity of Germany itself. Where the experience of the Second World War had served to pique the nationalist sentiments of many German South Africans, it had had the opposite effect for those in the newly formed (West) German republic (BRD). It followed that while the community of Kroondal welcomed the conservative emphasis of South Africa's newly elected Apartheid government (including the sympathetic stance that it maintained towards those who had affiliations to Nazi Germany) its policies of racial discrimination proved incompatible to the sensibilities of the post-war generation in Germany. Bringing this distinction to light were the events in South Africa during 1960 that are portrayed in this thesis through the correspondence of Richard and Irma Behrens. Centred upon the events of the Sharpeville massacre, the Behrens

letters provide insight into the sense of betrayal that Kroondal experienced as a result of Germany's negative reaction to these events. It is a theme that is informed by the other recorded examples of racial interaction in Kroondal in the decades before, including the recollections of the Kroondal settlement during the 1920s by Naboth Mokgatle and the correspondence of Ida Behrens between 1944 and 1952. In each of these sources, the persistence of racial tensions, specifically regarding the procurement and expectations of Black contracted labour, provide important insights into Kroondal's association to South African racial norms leading into the Apartheid period.

As the dichotomy between Kroondal's conservatism and the world view of those in the BRD continued to extend into the 1970s and 1980s, it is clear that the notion of Germanness in Kroondal no longer corresponded to the identity of Germany. Rather, the conservatism that had sustained the community's identification to Germany in the past, now served to isolate it from the reality of Germany as it had come to be in the present. Compounding this situation was the fact that the new (post-war) generation of HMS missionaries from Germany no longer proved willing to settle permanently in South Africa, electing instead to return home once their children had reached a school going age. Thus, where Kroondal experienced the peak of its population in the early 1970s, the signs of an impending decline become noticeable as its growth stagnated over the course of the next decade, before entering into an almost linear descent. It was within the context of these circumstances that the gradual assimilation of Kroondal's inhabitants became assured. Faced with the limitations of Kroondal's narrowing demographics, the settlement's fourth generation increasingly entered into marriages with non-German speakers from the surrounding (White) population. Yet, even for those who did not, the appropriation of Afrikaans and English elements into their spoken language reinforced the reality that the erosion of their Germanness, whether through the passage of time or the influence of the South African surroundings, had finally served to isolate Kroondal from Germany. In its stead, the community found itself aligned to the conservatism of White South Africa and to the nostalgia of an identity that they had believed themselves duty-bound to maintain.

It is from the basis of this research that the history of Kroondal can be presented as an arc of diasporic identity: a rising trajectory from the late nineteenth century, peaking after the Second World War in a pinnacle symbolised by the DAHA relief work, followed by a period of steady decline as the changing concept of Germanness

slipped from the Kroondal community's grasp. In doing so, the beliefs and traditions that had seemed so secure during Kroondal's growth over the first half of the twentieth century, proved to be ephemeral by the end of the twentieth, having been undermined by realities in Germany itself. While the inevitable fall was conceptual, it seems ironically to be mirrored in the hollowed-out substructure of the countryside where the encroaching mines have made an agrarian lifestyle in the area increasingly difficult. In the end, the passage of time, marked by the secularisation of the ideals set by Louis Harms, their metamorphosis into nationalism and its eventual erosion, has made capturing the spectral essence of *Heimat* no less difficult now than it was in the past.

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